

# Political Criminology: Unmasking Power Through The Study Of Justice Manipulation And Authority Exploitation

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## Abstract

*This study explores the complex relationship between political power and justice, focusing on how justice systems are manipulated by state actors to maintain control, silence dissent, and reinforce authority. Political Criminology, as a specialized field, addresses these dynamics by examining how political elites and institutions subvert legal frameworks to marginalize opposition and uphold existing hierarchies. Unlike conventional criminology,<sup>1</sup> which centers on individual criminal behavior, political criminology analyzes crimes committed by or facilitated through state actors and policies. This research uses qualitative case studies and critical discourse analysis to investigate patterns of justice manipulation across both authoritarian regimes and democratic contexts. Findings reveal that authoritarian states often use justice systems overtly to suppress opposition, while democracies exhibit subtler forms of control that disproportionately impact minority and activist groups. The study highlights the need for judicial independence, legal reforms, and human rights protections to counteract politically driven injustices. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the importance of addressing these abuses to promote accountability and uphold the integrity of justice systems.*

**Keywords:** Criminology, Politics of Criminals, Democracies, Dictatorship, Interest Groups, Legal Criminology, Justice System.

## Introduction

In democratic systems, the manipulation of justice, while less overt, remains profoundly detrimental. Even in societies where the rule of law is ostensibly upheld, the influence of powerful interest groups, political corruption, and systemic inequalities can significantly distort legal processes. The criminal justice system is often manipulated through selective enforcement, with marginalized groups disproportionately targeted by law enforcement, while those with wealth or political power receive preferential treatment. Moreover, political elites exert influence over legal outcomes through control of appointments within the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, resulting in biased decisions that reinforce the status quo rather than ensuring impartial justice. Additionally, the manipulation of justice is evident in the amending and titling of constitutions, where political elites may reshape legal frameworks to consolidate power, limit democratic processes, or entrench their authority. The selective revision of constitutional provisions can render legal protections vulnerable, particularly for marginalized groups, and transform the legal system into a tool for preserving political control rather than safeguarding the rights of citizens. Furthermore, the framing and enforcement of laws reveal underlying biases. Criminal laws are not created in a vacuum; they reflect the prevailing values and priorities of the society that produces them. When laws disproportionately criminalize behaviors associated with marginalized communities such as racial minorities, immigrants, or the economically disadvantaged it becomes evident that the legal system serves the interests of the powerful rather than promoting

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justice for all. Similarly, laws that facilitate the surveillance, incarceration, or punishment of political opponents or activists transform the justice system into a tool of state control. Political criminology critically examines "State Crime," which encompasses illegal or harmful actions perpetrated by state actors or sanctioned by the state, often shielded from accountability due to the state's power to define and protect its own actions from scrutiny (Drake et al., 2024).

The justice system often becomes complicit in state crimes, either by failing to investigate or actively covering up these violations. In cases where governments engage in widespread human rights abuses, such as political imprisonment or ethnic cleansing, the judiciary may be co-opted to prevent legal challenges or international condemnation. In many instances, perpetrators of state crimes evade accountability due to their positions of power, which shield them from legal prosecution. On the international stage, efforts to address state crime, through bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC), have faced limited success. Political considerations often undermine the effectiveness of international tribunals, as powerful states resist scrutiny of their own actions, hindering meaningful accountability. Consequently, state crime remains a critical concern for political criminologists, who seek to understand how power facilitates criminal behavior and how legal systems can be manipulated to prevent justice. The manipulation of justice has profound implications for society. When justice systems are weaponized for political control, they erode public trust in the rule of law and undermine the legitimacy of governmental institutions. Citizens may no longer view the justice system as a defender of rights but as a tool for maintaining the dominance of the powerful. This can foster widespread disillusionment, weaken social cohesion, and promote an atmosphere of fear and repression. Moreover, selective enforcement of laws and the disproportionate targeting of certain groups intensify social inequality, entrenching cycles of poverty, disenfranchisement, and systemic marginalization. As a result, rather than promoting social order, the justice system becomes a mechanism for reinforcing inequality and preserving the status quo. (Ross & Tietjen, 2024).

### Literature Review

Comparative criminology studies in the Global North have generated influential theories that explain various criminological phenomena, including rising punitiveness, escalating crime rates, and the disproportionate targeting of certain populations by the criminal justice system. At first glance, these theories seem universally applicable, especially in countries with similar political ideologies and social structures, such as the U.S. and the U.K. Both nations, for instance, adopted neoliberal policies under leaders like George Bush and Margaret Thatcher, which led to the implementation of similar criminal justice practices, such as zero-tolerance policies, curfews, private prisons, and electronic monitoring. This alignment in political ideology helped legitimize punitive approaches to crime, creating a cycle of influence between the two nations' political campaigns and criminological policies. While these comparative studies offer compelling support for the idea that criminological theories can be generalized across countries with comparable political orientations, this assumption begins to falter when the scope is expanded to include more diverse nations. The notion that criminological trends follow a universal, predictable pattern is challenged when examining the criminal justice systems of different countries within the Global North. Despite sharing similar levels of development, these nations are shaped by unique local contexts ranging from historical legacies and cultural norms to economic structures and political climates. These factors significantly influence the formulation and application of criminal justice policies, suggesting that criminological theories must be contextualized within specific national and cultural frameworks, rather than assuming one-size-fits-all applicability (Piacentini & Slade, 2024).

Cavadino and Dignan's political system theory links a country's level of punitiveness to its political economy, categorizing systems into neoliberal, conservative, social democratic, or corporatist models. According to the theory, neoliberal societies tend to have higher prison rates due to exclusionary economic policies, while social democratic systems, with more inclusive policies, generally experience lower incarceration rates. However, this theory does not always apply when looking at specific examples from the Global North. For instance, while Italy and the Netherlands have similar incarceration rates, their reasons for this divergence cannot be explained solely by political economy. The Netherlands' low prison rates are largely the result of its regulatory political economy, whereas Italy's relatively lower rates are shaped by local cultural factors, such as Catholic traditions of forgiveness and solidarity, rather than the state's regulatory role. This suggests that political economy is not always the primary driver of punitive policies. The issue becomes even more apparent when examining countries in the Global South. China, which has largely avoided neoliberal ideologies, still maintains high incarceration rates, while Russia, which adopted neoliberal reforms, has seen a significant reduction in its prison population. These examples challenge the idea that criminological trends are universally driven by political and economic systems. They reveal the dangers of ethnocentrism the assumption that theories from the Global North can be universally applied and emphasize the need to consider local, specific, and contextual factors when analyzing criminological phenomena. While theories from the Global North may offer insights in certain contexts, they often fail to capture the complexities and variations found in countries with different political, cultural, and historical backgrounds. (Ong, 2024).

The illegal trade of glass eels, despite ongoing regulations and bans, persists through a variety of methods that blur the lines between legal and illegal practices, fitting the concept of green collar crime activities that straddle both domains. For example, individuals involved in the trade may transport eels in plastic bags inside suitcases or mislabel shipments of glass eels as other fish species in order to evade detection. These methods are so profitable that participants are willing to accept the risks associated with customs seizures, incorporating the possibility of "busted cargo" into their profit calculations. The complexity of controlling the illegal eel trade is compounded by the existence of a legal market, making enforcement particularly difficult. When a legal trade is in place, distinguishing between legitimate and illicit activities becomes a challenge, as the illegal actions can easily be concealed within the legal framework. As one enforcement officer noted, the presence of a legal market provides an opportunity to mask illegal practices, while another pointed out that it is nearly impossible to monitor the entire supply chain, particularly when legal and illegal transactions are intertwined (Walker et al., 2024).

One of the methods used to conceal illegal activity in the glass eel trade is "restocking" a practice intended to repopulate eel populations but often exploited to justify the illegal transport and sale of eels. The lack of clear definitions regarding what constitutes legitimate restocking creates opportunities for diversion into illegal markets, as individuals can claim the eels were released for repopulation while secretly selling them for profit. Enforcement officers and scientists have highlighted the difficulty in tracking eels intended for restocking, as large quantities can be diverted without detection. The effectiveness of restocking as a conservation strategy is also contested, with some arguing that it merely sustains the eel fishery without contributing to genuine population recovery. Furthermore, the enforcement of eel trade regulations is hindered by limited resources, particularly when compared to more high-profile illicit activities like drug trafficking. The illegal glass eel trade does not receive the same level of attention from authorities, and efforts to report illegal fishing often go unaddressed. The inconsistent enforcement across countries and the lack of coordination between regulatory bodies further complicate efforts. While some countries, such as Spain, have dedicated enforcement units for wildlife trafficking, many others lack the resources or commitment to address the issue effectively. Ultimately, the blending of legal and illegal trade practices in glass eels presents significant challenges to both regulation and conservation. The complexity of enforcement, coupled with financial incentives and a lack of prioritization, makes combating this illegal trade an ongoing and formidable struggle (Gutierrez & Duffy, 2024).

In his 1987 article "Propaganda Studies in American Social Science: The Rise and Fall of a Critical Paradigm," J. Michael Sproule traces the history and evolution of propaganda studies in the U.S. after World War I. Sproule highlights how post-WWI disillusionment led to the emergence of "propaganda analysis," a critical approach focused on understanding and countering the impact of propaganda on democracy. One of the pivotal figures in this movement, Walter Lippmann, argued that propaganda had distorted the democratic process by manipulating public opinion through mass communication channels. Lippmann's work was instrumental in raising awareness about the role of media in shaping public opinion, which led to an academic surge in propaganda studies during the 1920s and 1930s. This interest resulted in systematic research, the creation of frameworks, and the development of educational programs aimed at helping the public recognize and resist propaganda. In 1937, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was founded and published guidelines to help people identify common propaganda techniques, such as "name calling," "glittering generalities," "bandwagon," and "testimonial." These accessible guidelines were designed to foster critical thinking. While these efforts effectively raised public awareness, the study of propaganda eventually declined as the social sciences shifted towards positivist methods, which were seen as more methodologically rigorous and politically neutral. As a result, propaganda analysis was gradually overshadowed by the rise of mass communication studies. However, in recent years, with the rise of "fake news" and the increasing sophistication of media manipulation, there has been a resurgence of interest in propaganda studies. Scholars like Jason Stanley (2015) have expanded on earlier theories, using linguistic tools to explain how propaganda operates on a covert level. Stanley introduces the concept of "not-at-issue content," referring to implicit messages in communication that shape how people interpret information without being explicitly stated. This technique is central to propaganda, embedding ideological meanings that are often difficult to challenge. Stanley also distinguishes between supporting propaganda which promotes specific ideals through emotional or nonrational means and undermining propaganda which uses virtuous ideals to serve contradictory goals. Both forms of propaganda can be observed in criminological issues, where public opinion is manipulated either to support or undermine justice-related ideals. Ultimately, despite the challenges faced by the field over time, propaganda analysis remains a valuable tool for understanding how information manipulation functions, particularly in modern media and its intersection with criminology (Drake et al., 2024).

Criminology has long grappled with the tension between scientific research and its practical application to real-world issues. Historically, criminologists have faced criticism for being either too detached from practical policy solutions or for focusing excessively on theoretical explanations of crime without offering actionable insights. This ongoing debate can be traced back to early critiques, such as the Michael-Adler and Martinson Reports, which questioned the relevance of criminological research in addressing crime control. More recently, concerns have arisen about criminologists becoming too removed from practical policy issues. These criticisms have contributed to a divide within the field, where theoretical scholarship is often viewed as separate from applied, policy-oriented

research, despite criminology's origins as both a sociological and applied discipline. Over time, criminology has evolved significantly, with key theoretical developments such as the Chicago School's culture conflict theory, Sutherland's differential association theory, and Merton's anomie theory. These theories not only aimed to explain crime but also sought to offer solutions to social problems. Later theories, including labeling theory and life-course perspectives, further integrated criminology's theoretical foundations with practical policy concerns. This growing focus on applied research has been reflected in initiatives from professional organizations, such as the American Society of Criminology (ASC), which began emphasizing the role of criminological research in shaping crime policy in the 2000s. In support of these efforts, specialized divisions like the Division of Experimental Criminology were created to advance applied research, particularly through experimental methods. Additionally, initiatives to assess and organize criminological evidence such as the establishment of clearinghouses and the increasing use of meta-analysis to evaluate crime prevention programs have helped refine the field's understanding of effective interventions. As a result, criminology has produced a body of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of some crime prevention and intervention programs, marking a shift away from the earlier "nothing works" mentality (Ouassini & Ouassini, 2024).

However, significant challenges remain in translating criminological evidence into actionable policy, especially given the field's historical reluctance to engage directly with public policy and the inherent complexity of criminological research. While there is growing support among criminologists for a more translational focus, one key obstacle is determining what constitutes credible evidence for policy making. Criminological research is often criticized for its lack of causal certainty, and much of the field's scholarship does not provide the robust evidence necessary for clear, definitive policy recommendations. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are widely considered the gold standard for establishing causality, but such studies are not always available or feasible, particularly for addressing complex social issues. In many cases, policymakers must act in the absence of ideal evidence, requiring criminologists to balance the limitations of available research with the urgency of pressing policy concerns. While RCTs can offer valuable insights, their applicability across different contexts and populations is often limited, and their findings must be interpreted within broader theoretical frameworks. Even when high-quality evidence is available, translating it into effective policy and practice is fraught with practical constraints, including limited resources, political resistance, and the specific performance metrics that drive the behavior of criminal justice agencies. Policymakers are often under pressure to deliver quick results, which complicates the implementation of evidence-based solutions. Additionally, political ideologies can influence the willingness to adopt evidence-informed policies, particularly on contentious issues such as gun control or criminal justice reform. In light of these challenges, criminologists must be mindful of the realities policymakers face, tailoring their recommendations to these constraints while maintaining transparency about the limitations and uncertainties inherent in their research. (Blomberg et al., 2024).

Terrorism studies, once criticized for being overly descriptive and lacking solid theoretical grounding, have increasingly found a place within criminology a discipline rich in established theories of crime that can be applied to the study of terrorism. Criminologists have utilized these theoretical frameworks to develop a deeper understanding of terrorism, testing these ideas through rigorous empirical methods and using robust data. The study in question systematically reviews articles published in 13 leading criminology journals to analyze how terrorism is framed theoretically, the hypotheses tested, the methods used, and the resulting policy recommendations. The findings reveal that while terrorism has gained more attention in top criminology journals over time, many existing criminological theories have been underutilized in explaining terrorism. Despite criminology's extensive theoretical resources, only a limited number of theories have been applied to understand the causes, dynamics, and consequences of terrorism. This gap in theoretical engagement suggests that criminology has not yet fully integrated its theoretical perspectives into terrorism studies. The study calls for additional research, particularly using qualitative, theoretical, and mixed-methods approaches, which could offer richer insights into terrorism. The limited application of certain criminological theories highlights missed opportunities to deepen our understanding of terrorism's causes and development. Another key finding is the relative neglect of research on the creation of terrorism laws. While criminological literature has contributed significantly to understanding the causes of terrorism and its associated behaviors, there has been less emphasis on the legal and policy dimensions of counterterrorism. Specifically, the development, enactment, and enforcement of terrorism laws remain underexplored. This lack of focus on the political and legal aspects of terrorism policy is a critical gap, as the creation and enforcement of terrorism laws are central to understanding how societies respond to terrorism and how legal frameworks both shape and are shaped by it. The study also highlights strengths and weaknesses within criminological literature on terrorism. A key strength is that criminologists have drawn from a wide range of theoretical perspectives, both within and outside the discipline, applying these to understand terrorism. Additionally, the diverse methodologies and data sources used in the research have contributed both to criminology and to the broader field of terrorism studies. (Freilich et al., 2024).

Despite these strengths, several weaknesses remain. There is a clear need for more research that bridges criminological theories with empirical studies of terrorism, particularly research that incorporates mixed-methods approaches or extends beyond the most commonly used criminological paradigms. The study concludes by

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recognizing criminology's valuable contributions to terrorism research, noting its engagement with a range of theories and diverse methods. Criminologists have deepened the broader academic discourse on terrorism while advancing criminological theory and practice. However, the study suggests several areas where criminologists could expand their research efforts. Specifically, criminologists are encouraged to explore the making, breaking, and reactions to terrorism laws in more detail an area that remains crucial but underexplored. Addressing these gaps would not only enhance the theoretical foundations of terrorism studies but also offer more comprehensive insights into how societies can effectively combat and respond to terrorism. While criminological research has made meaningful strides in studying terrorism through both theoretical and empirical lenses, there are significant opportunities to broaden the scope of research. Criminologists are urged to apply a wider array of theoretical frameworks, engage in more qualitative and mixed-methods research, and focus on the legal and policy dimensions of terrorism. This expanded approach would not only advance criminology as a discipline but also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of terrorism and how societies can prevent and respond to it. Green criminology has been instrumental in highlighting the harmful impacts of human activity on the environment and nonhuman animals, focusing on ecological damage caused by various crimes and forms of exploitation. However, a significant limitation of green criminology is its tendency to adopt a gender-neutral stance, often overlooking the disproportionate role that men and masculinity play in environmental harm. Address this gap by engaging green criminology in a critical dialogue with ecofeminism, a framework that emphasizes the gendered nature of environmental destruction and violence against nonhuman animals. It argues that environmental harms should not only be viewed as crimes against nature but also as deeply intertwined with systems of male-dominated power and gendered violence. Ecofeminism connects the oppression of women, the exploitation of nature, and the subjugation of nonhuman animals, revealing how violence against the environment and animals is rooted in hierarchical dualisms. These dualisms position humans as superior to nature and, in turn, associate masculinity with dominance, placing men in control over both women and the natural world. Ecofeminism posits that these power structures encourage men to view the environment and animals as objects to be dominated and exploited, rather than as entities with inherent value. This worldview justifies harmful actions, as it disconnects men from the consequences of their behavior, allowing them to exploit the planet and its nonhuman inhabitants without ethical consideration. By integrating ecofeminist perspectives into green criminology, this underscores that men's violence against the environment and animals is not merely a matter of individual choice but part of broader, gendered power dynamics that perpetuate harm. The ecological crisis and the exploitation of nature are not just environmental issues but are also deeply social and cultural, rooted in patriarchal systems that promote aggression, control, and detachment from the well-being of other living beings. Understanding the gendered dynamics of environmental harm is essential to grasping the full scope of the problem and developing more effective strategies to combat it (Fisher & Kearns, 2024).

However, the paper also suggests that ecofeminism offers a path forward by advocating for a fundamental shift in how society understands and interacts with nature. At the heart of ecofeminism is the concept of an ethic of care, which challenges hierarchical thinking and promotes more egalitarian and compassionate relationships between humans, animals, and the environment. This ethic encourages individuals, particularly men, to reconsider their roles in relation to the world around them and to cultivate more respectful and interconnected ways of living. By encouraging men to care for others whether other humans, animals, or the planet ecofeminism provides a model for transforming the mindset that drives environmental destruction. The argues that fostering care, empathy, and emotional connection can help dismantle the masculine-oriented frameworks that perpetuate violence against the environment. When men develop more nurturing relationships with the natural world and its inhabitants, they may be less inclined to treat them as resources to be exploited or controlled. This shift in perspective can foster more sustainable and mutually supportive ways of living, where men's roles are not defined by power and domination, but by collaboration and interdependence. By highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence and emotional labor, especially within the context of masculinity, the paper asserts that ecofeminism provides a powerful framework for both understanding and addressing the gendered dimensions of environmental harm (Burrell & Pedersen, 2024).

Integrates insights from criminology, sociology, political science, and media studies to argue that cultural criminology provides a more nuanced perspective for understanding the contemporary far-right, challenging existing approaches that primarily focus on "counter-extremism." By placing the contemporary far-right movement within a broader historical context, highlighting how it differs from earlier iterations of far-right ideology and actions. The emphasizes the recent resurgence of the far right, which has predominantly been framed through counter-extremism policies and interventions. While these frameworks are common in political and security discussions, they are critiqued for offering a limited understanding of the far-right's complexities. The article shifts focus to the concepts of "extremism," "radicalization," and "terrorism," arguing that these terms are often vague, ideologically charged, and not empirically grounded. These labels are inherently normative, reflecting a set of values about what constitutes acceptable political or social behavior, and they often obscure rather than clarify our understanding of extremist movements. By relying on these ill-defined terms, the current discourse on the far right risks mischaracterizing or oversimplifying the movement, neglecting its dynamic and evolving nature (Katz & Roldán, 2024).

This critique highlights the limitations of traditional counter-extremism approaches, which often treat extremism as a static and monolithic phenomenon, rather than recognizing it as a complex and evolving social and cultural issue. In contrast, the article argues that cultural criminology offers a more effective analytical tool for understanding the contemporary far right. Cultural criminology emphasizes the role of subcultures, style, and identity in shaping social movements, offering insights into how far-right groups construct and promote their ideologies. This approach also highlights the importance of emotions and affect in political mobilization, an aspect often overlooked in conventional criminological or political analyses. By considering the symbolic and emotional dimensions of far-right engagement, cultural criminology is better positioned to explore the cultural appeal of the movement and how it resonates on a psychological and emotional level. For instance, the far-right's use of provocative imagery, language, and symbols helps foster a sense of belonging and identity, which is key to attracting and retaining followers. Moreover, cultural criminology's focus on networked digital media provides a crucial perspective on the contemporary far right, as these movements increasingly rely on online platforms to spread ideas, organize, and recruit. The internet enables the rapid dissemination of far-right ideologies, creating virtual spaces where like-minded individuals can connect, share content, and reinforce each other's beliefs. This digital dimension is integral to the far-right movement today and must be understood in relation to the broader cultural and emotional dynamics at play. Cultural criminology's focus on media and technology thus offers a timely and relevant framework for analyzing the far-right's digital presence and its influence on public discourse (Karas, 2024).

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While the use of open-source data has grown rapidly, the boundaries and limitations of these methods remain unclear, indicating a need for further exploration of their potential and challenges. One key observation in the review is the variation in how researchers construct open-source databases. Many studies have relied on open-source data without thoroughly assessing its credibility or explaining the processes used to gather and analyze it. This lack of transparency can undermine the reliability of findings and hinder the reproducibility of research. The review stresses the importance of transparency, urging scholars to be more diligent in documenting how they source, validate, and analyze open-source information. Several methodological challenges are highlighted, particularly in ensuring the quality and credibility of the data. Open-source data is often publicly accessible and can come from various sources, such as social media, news outlets, and government reports, which may differ in reliability and accuracy. The absence of formal oversight or standardized protocols for evaluating credibility can lead to inconsistencies in data collection and analysis. Researchers are encouraged to adopt more rigorous practices, such as cross-checking information across multiple reliable sources or using established guidelines for data verification. The review also outlines the strengths and weaknesses of open-source research methods. On one hand, open-source data enables large-scale studies that cover a broad range of topics and include diverse information, making it possible to investigate events that might otherwise be inaccessible or underreported. On the other hand, inconsistencies in data quality and the potential for bias in open-source sources present significant challenges. These issues can weaken the validity of findings and reduce the overall impact of the research. The review stresses the need for greater methodological rigor and oversight to address these concerns and enhance the reliability of open-source research. In terms of best practices, the review offers several recommendations. First, it emphasizes the importance of transparency in documenting the research process, including detailed descriptions of data collection, source verification, and analysis methods. Second, it advocates for a more systematic approach to data collection, encouraging researchers to develop clear protocols for selecting, verifying, and analyzing open-source information. Third, it calls for improvements in oversight and quality control, suggesting that researchers adopt more rigorous standards to ensure the credibility and reliability of the data they use (Chermak et al., 2024).

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First, it emphasizes the importance of transparency in documenting the research process, including providing detailed descriptions of data collection, source verification, and analysis methods. Second, it advocates for a more systematic approach to data collection, encouraging researchers to establish clear protocols for selecting, verifying, and analyzing open-source information. Third, it calls for improvements in oversight and quality control, urging researchers to adopt more rigorous standards to ensure the credibility and reliability of the data they use.

The second aim of the paper is to highlight emerging forms of crime that require geographical scrutiny, with a particular focus on cybercrime. Cybercrime, including activities such as hacking, online fraud, and identity theft, presents new challenges for criminology and crime geography. Unlike traditional crimes, which occur within defined physical spaces, cybercrime transcends national borders and takes place in digital environments. The geographical implications of cybercrime are complex, as the crime itself may not have a clear, physical location. However, the impact of cybercrime on individuals, organizations, and nations is deeply spatial. The author argues that geographers must engage with these emerging forms of crime, as they offer opportunities to expand crime geography beyond its traditional boundaries. By studying cybercrime, geographers can contribute to discussions on global security, digital infrastructure, and the evolving nature of crime in the digital age.

In its third objective, the paper introduces the concept of Southern criminology, which challenges the dominance of Western perspectives in criminological research. Southern criminology calls for a more inclusive approach to understanding crime, one that considers the experiences and perspectives of the Global South, often marginalized in mainstream criminology. The paper suggests that integrating Southern criminology into crime geography can provide valuable insights and diversify research agendas. It argues that incorporating perspectives from the Global South will enhance the understanding of crime in different geographical contexts, contributing to a more comprehensive view of global crime patterns. By addressing issues such as inequality, colonialism, and post-colonial legacies, Southern criminology encourages researchers to consider how these historical and social factors shape crime in various regions of the world. Combining these ideas, the paper proposes that the growing interest in crime by geographers should be seen as the development of "new geographies of crime." This term reflects the dynamic, evolving nature of the field, which increasingly addresses both traditional and new forms of crime in diverse geographical contexts. The author believes that the geographical study of crime has entered a new phase one that is more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and attuned to the changing nature of crime in the 21st century. This shift recognizes that crime is not just a localized phenomenon, but one that transcends both physical and virtual boundaries, deeply intertwined with global social, political, and technological changes (Hall & Yarwood, 2024).

This article critically examines the relationship between British criminology and state institutions, with a specific focus on the discipline's collaboration with the UK military. Building upon existing critiques, it explores how criminology has often worked with state power, particularly within the military context, in ways that may be problematic. The article reveals how criminological research, perhaps unintentionally, has contributed to shielding the British military from criticism, effectively depoliticizing the violence associated with military actions. The author introduces the concept of the "criminological–military enterprise," a term that critiques criminology's increasing involvement with military institutions and their knowledge production. This collaboration is situated within the broader "knowledge economy" of the UK military (Catignani & Basham, 2021).

The article argues that criminology's growing collaboration with the military has significant implications for how military violence is perceived and studied, often softening or neutralizing critiques of the military's actions. Drawing on criminology and critical military studies, the author introduces the concept of the "criminological–military enterprise" to analyze the growing integration of criminology with military interests. This blending of

criminology, traditionally concerned with crime and justice, with military objectives is presented not merely as an academic shift but as one with real-world consequences. The author suggests that criminologists, in working closely with military institutions, may unintentionally—or intentionally normalize and legitimize military violence, obscuring the political dimensions of military actions and reducing criminologists' ability to critique state-sanctioned violence. The article critiques criminology's increasing role within the military's "knowledge economy," where research produced by academic institutions informs military strategies, tactics, and policies. When criminology aligns too closely with military interests, the article warns, it risks becoming a tool for advancing military goals, rather than challenging them. This collaboration may present military violence as a neutral or technical issue, removing its political context of power, injustice, and state-sanctioned violence. Furthermore, the article highlights a "blended" research approach, where criminology's involvement with the military undermines its objectivity and independence. This lack of critical distance from the military compromises criminology's potential to challenge state power and address justice and human rights issues within military conflicts. Instead, criminology may inadvertently reinforce the status quo by shielding military practices from public scrutiny. The author calls for a "repoliticization" of military issues within criminological research. This entails reexamining military violence with an awareness of its political nature, urging criminologists to critically engage with the broader implications of military actions for society, human rights, and justice. By repoliticizing the study of military violence, criminology can reclaim its role in questioning state power and holding institutions accountable, rather than supporting military agendas (McGarry, 2024).

This article will highlight the growing and often problematic relationship between criminology and military institutions, particularly through the lens of the "criminological–military enterprise." It will emphasize the critical need for criminologists to reassess their role in this partnership, recognizing the dangers of depoliticizing military violence and unintentionally legitimizing state power. At a time when international governments will continue reshaping constitutional frameworks to support specific elements of state power and military agendas, criminology's ability to critically engage with these shifts will become even more essential. By calling for a repoliticization of military issues, this article will advocate for criminology to return to its roots questioning injustice, holding state power accountable, and protecting human rights. Only by doing so will criminology truly fulfill its potential as a force for justice, challenging the growing influence of military agendas and their impact on global governance.

This pioneering research aims to introduce and develop "Political Criminology", a concept that explores how state power and institutional authority are sometimes wielded to secure political advantage, potentially at the expense of justice and democratic values. Unlike traditional criminology, which focuses on crimes committed by individuals or groups, political criminology examines how governments or ruling authorities may manipulate laws, constitutional amendments, and official policies in ways that technically remain within the bounds of legality but can undermine ethical governance and public trust.

Political criminology highlights state-sponsored actions such as the strategic passing of laws or constitutional changes that are crafted to benefit a ruling party or government faction rather than serving the public. For example, a government may amend constitutional rules to expand its control, limit opposition, or build mechanisms that reduce transparency and accountability. By studying these practices, political criminology aims to uncover how power structures exploit legal frameworks to further political objectives, bringing to light the ways in which such actions can compromise the principles of justice, erode democratic values, and distort the core purpose of governance.

### **Methodology**

This research has begun with a comprehensive literature review on political criminology, focusing on state power, corruption, political violence, and legal manipulation. The review has identified gaps in existing research and established a theoretical framework, drawing on state crime theory, legal cynicism, and theories of political power abuse. The main component will be a series of case studies examining political manipulation of justice, including examples of state-sponsored injustice, politically motivated legal decisions, and the suppression of justice. Data will be collected from government reports, legal documents, media, and expert interviews. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to examine how power is constructed and justified through legal manipulation. Thematic analysis will also be employed to identify recurring themes such as legal reforms, law enforcement politicization, and media influence on public perceptions of justice. To enhance credibility, triangulation will be applied by cross-referencing data from case studies, interviews, and secondary sources. Ethical considerations will be addressed by ensuring informed consent, protecting participants' anonymity, and safeguarding those at risk from retaliation. The methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how political power corrupts the justice system and its societal implications.

### **Discussion**



In this discussion, we'll look at different case studies to understand the idea of "Political Criminology". By going through specific examples, we'll see how governments and state bodies may use laws, policies, and even constitutional changes to gain political benefits. These case studies will show how those in power can sometimes alter or use legal frameworks in ways that may favor their interests over the public's. This approach helps us uncover patterns in political behavior and see how political criminology can explain certain actions taken by authorities to maintain or strengthen their control.

### Case Studies

This research sequence of case studies discusses and explores the concept of political criminology in depth, examining instances where political power intersects with legal systems to influence governance and public trust.

#### Case Study 1: The Babri Masjid Chronicles" – Unpacking Political Criminology in the Ayodhya Dispute

"The Babri Masjid Chronicles" provides an in-depth look into the political, historical, and social complexities surrounding Ayodhya, a site central to one of India's most significant religious and political conflicts. This case study serves as a powerful illustration of political criminology, highlighting how state power, political ideology, and the use of legal frameworks can shape public perception and influence the rule of law.

- ❖ **Background of the Ayodhya Dispute.** Central to this conflict is the construction of the Ram temple, championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Originally a religious dispute, the Ayodhya issue has evolved into a highly politicized matter, prompting critical questions about the role of the state in navigating cultural and religious tensions.
- ❖ **Political Power and Manipulation of Justice.** The manipulation of the Ayodhya conflict exemplifies how political power in this case, through state actions and legal channels can skew justice and impact specific groups within society. In Ayodhya, Modi's political moves are not merely about temple construction; they reflect a larger strategy to consolidate power by invoking religious identity.
- ❖ **Legal Processes and Judicial Influence.** This influence on justice is evident not only in the legal processes that supported actions like the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition but also in how the judiciary has been leveraged to legitimize these actions. Political criminology explores these dynamics, showing how political elites can harness legal systems to sustain power and limit opposition, raising concerns about justice and fairness.
- ❖ **Media Narratives and Public Perception.** Further, political rhetoric and media coverage surrounding Ayodhya reinforce government actions as essential to national unity. However, political criminology reveals how such narratives can obscure deeper injustices and hinder discussions about their effects on human rights, democracy and legal integrity.
- ❖ **Counter-Narratives of Unity and Inclusion.** Additionally, "The Babri Masjid Chronicles" brings forward alternative narratives that advocate for unity and reconciliation, challenging the divisive political narrative and promoting a more inclusive vision of India's heritage. From a criminological perspective, these counter-narratives play a vital role in challenging political manipulation and restoring accountability.

The Ayodhya dispute exemplifies political criminology's key themes, where state influence, legal manipulation, media manipulation and politicized justice serve as tools for maintaining power. By examining Ayodhya, political criminology offers critical insights into the wider implications of such actions, particularly regarding human rights, democracy, and the justice system's integrity. (Bukhari et al, 2024).

#### Case Study 2: Abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir – A Political Criminology Perspective

The 2019 abrogation of Articles 370 and 35(A) of the Indian Constitution marks a pivotal moment in the political history of India, significantly impacting the region of Jammu and Kashmir. From a political criminology perspective, this case study explores how the Indian government's constitutional change manipulates legal frameworks to redefine power dynamics, challenge political autonomy, and shape national and regional security concerns. The decision not only altered the political status of Jammu and Kashmir but also raised critical questions about governance, justice, and the relationship between the state and its citizens.

- ❖ **Manipulation of Legal and Political Structures.** Political criminology examines how state power, particularly through the manipulation of legal frameworks, can be used to further political agendas, often at the expense of justice and equity. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the abrogation of Article 370, which granted the region a special status, is a prime example of the state exercising its power to reshape the political landscape. This constitutional amendment effectively stripped the region of its autonomy and integrated it fully into the Indian Union, a decision made without the consent of the region's legislature or its people. This legal shift can be understood as an attempt by the Indian government to consolidate power over a region that

has long been a flashpoint for political and territorial disputes. From a criminological standpoint, this move can be seen as a politically motivated decision that disregards the principles of democracy and self-governance. The removal of special status, while legally justified by the Indian government, raises questions about the fairness and legitimacy of the decision-making process. By bypassing regional consent and manipulating the constitutional structure, the state's actions can be interpreted as a form of legal violence—where the law is used not as a tool for justice but as an instrument of political domination and control.

- ❖ **The Role of Legal Manipulation in Political Power.** The abrogation of Article 370 serves as a case study in how the manipulation of legal mechanisms can be used to suppress political dissent and maintain a particular political agenda. By altering the legal status of Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian government effectively rewrote the political rules of the region, centralizing control and diminishing local autonomy. This restructuring of political boundaries is a clear illustration of how legal instruments can be used to serve the interests of the state, often at the expense of marginalized communities. From a criminological perspective, this manipulation of the legal system is crucial because it reflects how state power can be used to suppress opposition and control dissent. The special status that Jammu and Kashmir had under Article 370 provided a degree of political autonomy, allowing the region to govern itself with a unique constitutional framework. The revocation of this article was perceived by many as an overt attempt to erase the region's distinct identity and merge it into the national framework, a move that has been met with resistance and unrest in the region. The political manipulation of justice through constitutional change thus raises concerns about the erosion of democratic processes and the undermining of the region's rights to self-governance.
- ❖ **Impact on Justice and Human Rights.** The abrogation of Article 370 also raises serious concerns about justice and human rights in Jammu and Kashmir. Political criminology underscores the idea that the state can often use legal mechanisms to justify actions that violate the rights of individuals or entire communities. In this case, the revocation of Article 370 can be seen as part of a broader strategy to centralize power and suppress dissent in a region that has a history of resistance to state control. The Indian government's actions, while framed as a means to integrate the region more fully into India, have led to widespread concerns about the suppression of political freedoms, civil rights, and the region's autonomy. By altering the legal structure in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian government has faced accusations of violating the principles of justice. The revocation of Article 370 is seen by many as an act that disregards the rights of the Kashmiri people to self-determination, a fundamental human right enshrined in international law. From a political criminology viewpoint, this could be classified as a form of state-sanctioned injustice, where the government uses its power to alter the legal and political environment to its advantage, suppressing the rights of vulnerable communities in the process.
- ❖ **Regional and International Implications.** The political criminology approach also allows for an understanding of the broader implications of the revocation for regional stability and international relations. The decision to revoke Article 370 has had far-reaching consequences for India-Pakistan relations, a relationship already defined by conflict over Kashmir. By altering the region's status, the Indian government has created new tensions with Pakistan, which has strongly opposed the change, arguing that it violates the principles of international law. This has the potential to further destabilize the region, increasing the likelihood of conflict and violence. Moreover, the revocation of Article 370 raises important questions about the application of federalism in India. In a federal system, regions are granted a certain level of autonomy to govern their own affairs. The removal of Jammu and Kashmir's special status undermines this principle, leading to concerns about the future of federalism in India. By concentrating power in the central government, this move could pave the way for further erosion of regional autonomy in other states, weakening the democratic fabric of the country.
- ❖ **Political Criminology and the Future of Jammu and Kashmir.** From a political criminology perspective, the abrogation of Article 370 highlights the ways in which the state manipulates legal and political structures to advance its own interests, often at the cost of justice and the rights of marginalized communities. The revocation of Article 370 has disrupted the balance of power in Jammu and Kashmir, raising important questions about the legitimacy of state power and the role of law in maintaining justice. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir offers a critical case study for understanding the intersections of law, power, and justice in the context of political criminology. It demonstrates how political actors can manipulate legal frameworks to secure control over a region, suppress dissent, and centralize power. It also underscores the importance of understanding how such actions can undermine the principles of democracy, federalism, and human rights, with consequences that extend far beyond the immediate political landscape.

As the situation in Jammu and Kashmir continues to unfold, the lessons from this case study highlight the need for a more critical approach to the study of political power and its impact on justice. Political criminology, by focusing on the ways in which legal systems are manipulated for political gain, provides valuable insights into the consequences of such actions for both the local population and the broader geopolitical landscape. The abrogation

of Article 370 serves as a stark reminder of the importance of safeguarding justice, autonomy, and human rights in the face of state power (Bukhari et al, 2024).

### **Case Study 3: India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) - Political Manipulation of Citizenship and Identity.**

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have emerged as central issues in India's political landscape, igniting widespread controversy and public unrest. Through the lens of political criminology, these policies exemplify how state power, legal frameworks, and administrative actions can be manipulated to alter national identity, control citizenship and potentially marginalize specific populations for political gain.

- ❖ **CAA and NRC: Political Tools of State Control.** The CAA, passed in December 2019, provides a pathway to citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who entered India before 2014, specifically granting amnesty to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, while excluding Muslims. This law is seen as a deliberate attempt to reshape the demographic landscape and manipulate national identity, positioning certain groups as more "legitimate" citizens while excluding others based on religion. The NRC, initially implemented in the state of Assam, is a system that requires individuals to provide documentation proving their Indian citizenship. Those unable to do so face the risk of being labeled "illegal immigrants" and potentially detained or deported. The NRC's application in Assam disproportionately affected Muslims, particularly Bengali-speaking Muslims, who often lacked the required documentation, leading to their exclusion from the citizenship register. Over 1.9 million people were excluded in Assam, raising concerns about statelessness and the potential creation of "detention centers" for those unable to prove their citizenship. From a political criminology perspective, both the CAA and NRC serve as mechanisms for the state to control citizenship, identity, and the political positioning of certain groups. These legal instruments reflect how laws, while framed as legitimate and constitutional, can be wielded by the state to marginalize specific communities and reshape the nation's identity in ways that align with the political interests of the ruling party, particularly in reinforcing a Hindu-majority vision for India.
- ❖ **Legal Violence and Marginalization of Muslims.** The CAA's explicit exclusion of Muslims has drawn sharp criticism, particularly from those who argue that it undermines India's secular constitution. Critics contend that the CAA is not simply an immigration or citizenship policy but a politically motivated tool to solidify the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) power base among Hindu voters by positioning Muslims as "outsiders." This selective granting of citizenship based on religion is seen as an attempt to marginalize the Muslim population, challenging the inclusive identity envisioned by the Indian Constitution. Similarly, the NRC process, particularly its implementation in Assam, disproportionately affected Muslim populations who were unable to provide the necessary documentation. This process risked rendering millions stateless, many of whom were Bengali-speaking Muslims from marginalized communities. This situation exemplifies "legal violence," a concept central to political criminology, in which the state manipulates legal mechanisms to criminalize certain populations, labeling them as "illegal" and excluding them from citizenship and its associated rights.
- ❖ **State Power and Suppression of Dissent.** The CAA and NRC have sparked widespread protests across India, particularly among students and civil society organizations. These protests, which call for the repeal of the CAA and the suspension of the NRC, have been met with repression from the state. The government has used force to suppress dissent, framing protestors as "anti-national" and criminalizing opposition movements. This reflects a common feature of political criminology as how state power uses legal and criminal systems to delegitimize and silence political opposition. The criminalization of protest highlights the state's efforts to control the political narrative and suppress challenges to its agenda.
- ❖ **Political Criminology and the Manipulation of Legal Systems.** The CAA and NRC illustrate how political power can manipulate legal frameworks to serve state interests, particularly in redefining who belongs to the nation and who does not. By using legal processes to exclude Muslims from the benefits of citizenship, the government reshapes the social contract, altering national identity to reflect the political goals of the ruling party. This manipulation of legal processes and the strategic use of the law to divide society along religious lines serve as a potent reminder of how state power can be used to alter justice itself, undermining the values of equality and pluralism that are foundational to India's democracy.
- ❖ **Implications for India's Secular Democracy.** The CAA and NRC pose significant challenges to India's secular and pluralistic democratic framework. They exemplify how political power, through the manipulation of legal structures, can alter the landscape of citizenship and national identity. From the perspective of political criminology, these policies are emblematic of the ways in which state power can be used to redefine legal norms, marginalize vulnerable populations, and perpetuate division within society. The ongoing protests and civil disobedience are vital in challenging these policies and ensuring that the principles of justice, equality,

and secularism remain central to India's democratic fabric. In conclusion, the CAA and NRC represent a critical case study of political manipulation through legal processes, demonstrating how state power can be used to criminalize and exclude entire communities, shaping national identity and citizenship for political purposes. Political criminology offers a framework for understanding how the law can be weaponized to perpetuate inequality and division, with profound implications for the future of India's democracy (Sharma, 2024).

#### Case Study 4: The Enduring Struggle for Palestinian Human Rights under Israeli Occupation

The ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine remains one of the most significant human rights crises of the modern era, drawing widespread international attention and activism. This case study focuses on the systematic violations of Palestinian rights under Israeli military operations, highlighting the persistent obstacles faced by human rights organizations and the limitations of global responses. It underscores how political and legal structures, manipulated by state power, perpetuate injustice and hinder the realization of human rights in the occupied territories.

- ❖ **Systematic Human Rights Violations.** At the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies a pattern of human rights violations that is entrenched and perpetuated through state power. These violations are not limited to instances of direct military violence but extend to a wide range of practices that undermine the dignity and livelihood of the Palestinian people. Palestinians continue to endure restricted mobility, land seizures, arbitrary detentions, home demolitions, and discriminatory policies that severely impact their quality of life. The occupation, which has lasted for decades, has not only devastated physical infrastructure but also stifled economic and social development, rendering Palestinians unable to fully exercise their rights to self-determination. From a political criminology perspective, these human rights violations reflect how state power can be abused and legalized through military operations and occupation policies. The Israeli government has enacted laws and military orders that institutionalize and justify these violations, using legal frameworks to legitimize acts of violence and oppression. The manipulation of legal processes and political structures is central to the perpetuation of this occupation, with international law and human rights principles often disregarded or selectively applied to shield the occupying state from accountability.
- ❖ **Obstacles Faced by Human Rights Organizations.** Human rights groups play an essential role in documenting abuses and advocating for accountability in the occupied territories. These organizations tirelessly report on the conditions faced by Palestinians, striving to hold the Israeli government accountable for its actions. However, they face significant obstacles in their work, including restricted access to occupied areas, threats to their personnel, and legal challenges aimed at discrediting their efforts. These constraints are part of a broader strategy by the Israeli government to silence dissent and limit international scrutiny of its policies. The political criminology lens highlights the ways in which state power seeks to suppress the voices of those challenging injustice, particularly in contexts where the state's actions are being scrutinized by the global community. The targeting of human rights organizations and activists represents a form of state repression, one that aims to maintain control over the narrative and avoid international condemnation. The use of legal tools, such as labeling human rights organizations as "terrorist" or "biased," serves to delegitimize the work of those advocating for Palestinian rights, further embedding the occupation's violence in the legal and political systems.
- ❖ **International Legal Constraints and Political Inaction.** International law and global political responses to the Israeli occupation have been largely ineffective in addressing the core issues of the conflict. Despite widespread recognition of the violations occurring in Palestine, international responses have often been muted or ineffectual. The United Nations and other international bodies have condemned Israel's actions, yet enforcement of these condemnations remains weak, with little to no tangible action taken to hold Israel accountable for its occupation and violations of international law. From a political criminology standpoint, this lack of international action underscores the ways in which global power dynamics can influence the enforcement of justice. The geopolitical interests of powerful nations, particularly those with close ties to Israel, have often impeded efforts to hold the Israeli government accountable for its actions. The manipulation of global legal frameworks, where international norms are selectively applied based on political considerations, serves to perpetuate the cycle of impunity for state violence.
- ❖ **The Path Forward: Justice, Accountability, and Solidarity.** Despite the significant challenges, hope persists through the unwavering resilience of the Palestinian people and the ongoing efforts of human rights advocates worldwide. The international community must renew its commitment to upholding human rights and international law, demanding accountability for the violations committed by Israeli forces and dismantling the oppressive structures that sustain the occupation. This requires not only holding perpetrators accountable but also amplifying the voices of Palestinians, whose experiences of injustice and oppression have long been marginalized in the international discourse. A genuine commitment to justice involves the deconstruction of the legal and political systems that sustain occupation, as well as the active promotion of a peaceful and

equitable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Human rights, dignity, and equality must be at the heart of these efforts, ensuring that all individuals in the region, regardless of their background or nationality, are granted their inherent rights and freedoms. As the struggle for Palestinian rights continues, it is through collective action and international solidarity that a just and lasting peace can be achieved. Political criminology provides a critical framework for understanding how power operates in the context of state violence and occupation, offering insights into how justice can be restored and how international actors can play a more active role in challenging oppressive state structures (Bukhari et al, 2024).

### **Case Study 5: Türkiye's Constitutional Amendments under Erdoğan's Rule**

Türkiye's constitutional amendments under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan provide a compelling case study in political criminology, highlighting how legal and institutional reforms can be strategically manipulated for political control. These amendments, particularly the 2017 shift from a parliamentary to a presidential system, reflect the complex interplay between state power, legal frameworks, and democratic governance. The legal changes that Erdoğan has implemented since coming to power demonstrate how state authority can be centralized, opposition can be suppressed, and the political landscape can be reframed in ways that favor the ruling elite.

- ❖ **Constitutional Amendments and Centralization of Power.** The 2017 constitutional referendum marked a significant shift in Türkiye's political structure, transforming the country from a parliamentary system to a presidential one. The amendments granted President Erdoğan sweeping executive powers, effectively transforming the presidency from a largely ceremonial position into one with near-absolute authority. These powers included the ability to issue decrees, appoint and dismiss ministers, and dissolve the legislature without parliamentary approval. This change was justified by the government as a necessary step for ensuring political stability, but it was widely criticized by opposition parties, human rights organizations, and political analysts as a move toward authoritarianism. From a political criminology perspective, these constitutional changes serve as a strategic manipulation of the legal and political system. They enable Erdoğan to consolidate power by diminishing checks and balances, diminishing democratic accountability, and centralizing authority within the presidency. The amendments reflect the broader concept in political criminology that the law can be used to legitimize the concentration of power, even when it fundamentally alters the democratic structures that once governed the nation.
- ❖ **Legal Manipulation and Suppression of Opposition.** A critical aspect of these amendments is how they allow Erdoğan to expand his influence not only over the executive and legislative branches of government but also over the judiciary, media, and civil society. The role of political criminology here is to reveal how the legal system, which is meant to safeguard against abuses of power, can be repurposed to serve the political interests of the ruling elite. By centralizing power, Erdoğan's administration has been able to suppress opposition, eliminate institutional checks on its power, and dismantle democratic processes that once limited his authority. Following the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan implemented a state of emergency, which played a crucial role in further consolidating his power. The state of emergency facilitated widespread purges across the military, judiciary, education system, and media, resulting in thousands of arrests, dismissals, and asset freezes. While the government framed these actions as necessary for national security and restoring stability, critics argue they were part of a broader strategy to target political opponents and eliminate democratic institutions. Political criminology, with its focus on how legal systems are used to control and criminalize dissent, helps to explain how such legal and political tactics can undermine the very foundations of democratic governance.
- ❖ **Erosion of Judicial Independence.** One of the most significant impacts of Erdoğan's constitutional amendments has been the erosion of judicial independence. Before the 2017 reforms, Türkiye's judiciary was relatively independent, but the amendments gave the president significant influence over the appointment of judges and prosecutors. This shift raised concerns about the politicization of the judiciary, transforming it into a tool for suppressing political adversaries. From a political criminology standpoint, this is an example of "state crime," in which the state uses its institutions to commit acts that undermine political and civil rights. By manipulating the judiciary, the government can silence dissent and ensure that legal decisions align with its political objectives, further consolidating Erdoğan's power.
- ❖ **Criminalizing Dissent: Media and Civil Society.** Erdoğan's rule has also seen the suppression of media and civil society, with numerous media outlets being shut down, journalists arrested, and opposition voices silenced. Many of these actions have been justified under the guise of national security or combating terrorism, with anti-terrorism laws being used to imprison journalists and activists. Those targeted are often labeled as "terrorists" or "enemies of the state" for expressing opposition to the government. From a political criminology perspective, this is a clear example of how dissent is criminalized by labeling opposition as a national security threat. Such actions allow the government to control the political narrative and delegitimize any challenge to its authority, all while using the legal system to justify its repressive tactics.
- ❖ **International Law and Human Rights Concerns.** Türkiye's constitutional amendments and the subsequent consolidation of power have raised concerns about the country's commitment to international law and human rights. As a member of international organizations like the Council of Europe and the United Nations, Türkiye is bound by international human rights standards, yet its actions often contradict these norms.

The manipulation of the legal system to suppress opposition and concentrate power directly undermines the democratic principles enshrined in international law. The lack of significant external intervention, despite the clear violations of democratic norms, highlights the challenges in holding states accountable for "legal" violations of human rights and democratic standards. Türkiye's constitutional amendments under Erdoğan's rule provide a stark example of how state power can be manipulated through legal reforms to centralize authority, suppress dissent, and reshape the political landscape. Political criminology offers a valuable framework for understanding how the law, rather than protecting democracy, can be used as a tool for authoritarianism. The legal manipulation of power, the erosion of judicial independence, and the criminalization of dissent all highlight the dangers of using legal systems to serve political ends, ultimately undermining democratic processes and human rights. These developments in Türkiye raise critical questions about the role of the law in maintaining or undermining democracy, both domestically and in the broader international context (Kurban, 2024).

#### **Case Study 6: Venezuela's Judicial Reforms under Maduro's Regime**

Venezuela's judicial reforms under Nicolás Maduro's regime offer a stark illustration of how state authorities can manipulate legal and institutional frameworks to consolidate power, suppress opposition, and maintain control over the state. Since Maduro ascended to the presidency in 2013, the Venezuelan government has systematically eroded democratic norms, using the judiciary as a central tool for political survival and repression. Political criminology, which examines the intersection of law, power, and crime, provides a valuable lens through which to understand the role of the judiciary in Venezuela's descent into authoritarianism.

- ❖ **Undermining Judicial Independence.** A key aspect of Maduro's judicial reforms has been the systematic undermining of judicial independence. Under the regime, the Venezuelan Supreme Court, which had maintained some level of independence during the earlier years of Hugo Chávez's presidency, gradually came under the control of the executive branch. Legal reforms ensured that the judiciary was populated predominantly by individuals loyal to the regime, with judicial appointments becoming highly politicized. This shift transformed the judiciary from an impartial arbiter of the law into a political tool used by the Maduro government to suppress opposition and legitimize its actions. In political criminology, this transformation reflects how state institutions, particularly the judiciary, can be redefined as mechanisms of political control and repression.
- ❖ **Manipulating the Judiciary to Undermine Political Opposition.** The manipulation of the judiciary was especially evident in the 2015 and 2016 legislative elections. In 2015, the opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), won a significant victory in the National Assembly, gaining control of the legislature for the first time in nearly two decades. However, the Maduro government, with the help of a Supreme Court now loyal to the regime, took drastic steps to neutralize the opposition's influence. The court declared the National Assembly in contempt of court and stripped it of its powers, citing the need to protect the constitution. In reality, this was a blatant attempt to undermine the opposition's control of the legislature and preserve the regime's grip on power. This manipulation of the judiciary to invalidate the results of a democratic election illustrates how state actors can use legal instruments to criminalize opposition and reframe legitimate political processes as unconstitutional.
- ❖ **Criminalizing Dissent and Political Opposition.** The Maduro regime also used the judiciary as a tool to criminalize dissent and suppress political opposition. During widespread protests in 2014 against the government's handling of the economy, the government turned to the judiciary to prosecute opposition leaders and activists. Prominent opposition figures like Leopoldo López were sentenced to long prison terms on charges of inciting violence, despite international condemnation that the charges were politically motivated. Additionally, numerous cases of arbitrary detention and judicial harassment were reported, with individuals targeted for criticizing the government. Political criminology highlights how legal systems can be repurposed to suppress political opposition, turning acts of resistance into criminal offenses under the guise of law and order.
- ❖ **Defying International Law and Human Rights Standards.** Maduro's government also demonstrated a disregard for international law and human rights standards. Despite decisions from international bodies such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the United Nations calling for the release of political prisoners and the cessation of arbitrary detentions, Venezuela's government regularly ignored or undermined these rulings. The regime's refusal to comply with international legal decisions and its withdrawal from regional human rights organizations underscore how state actors can manipulate the legal system to avoid accountability. From a political criminology perspective, this behavior is an example of "state crime," where the government not only violates individual rights but also manipulates legal norms to evade international scrutiny.
- ❖ **Creating a Legal Framework for Impunity.** The judicial reforms under Maduro were part of a broader strategy to consolidate power and maintain political control. The government manipulated the legal system to create a framework that shielded the regime from accountability for widespread corruption, human rights abuses, and economic mismanagement. By ensuring that the judiciary could no longer challenge the government's actions, Maduro's regime was able to continue its policies without fear of legal repercussions,

even in the face of domestic unrest and international condemnation. In this way, Venezuela's legal reforms facilitated the creation of a system of legal impunity for the ruling party, allowing them to operate with little regard for democratic values or human rights. The case of Venezuela illustrates how judicial reforms and legal manipulation are integral to maintaining authoritarian regimes. Through the systematic politicization of the judiciary, the regime criminalized political opposition, reframed democratic processes as unconstitutional, and used the law to suppress dissent. Political criminology offers an insightful framework for understanding these dynamics, revealing how legal systems can be turned into tools of repression rather than justice. The judicial reforms under Maduro's rule reflect a broader strategy to solidify and maintain political control, often at the expense of democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law. These actions serve as a powerful reminder of the dangers of legal manipulation in authoritarian regimes, where the law itself becomes a mechanism for perpetuating power (Polga-Hecimovich & Sanchez Urribarri, 2024).

#### **Case Study 7: South Africa's National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and Zuma's Corruption Charges**

The corruption charges against former South African President Jacob Zuma and the role of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) offer a compelling example of how political power can manipulate legal frameworks for personal or political advantage. Jacob Zuma's presidency (2009–2018) was marked by numerous corruption allegations, particularly involving a controversial arms deal from the late 1990s, long before his tenure as president. The handling of his legal challenges by the NPA reveals the complex interplay between state institutions, corruption, and the manipulation of legal systems for political ends. Political criminology, which explores the intersection of law, power, and crime, helps illuminate how state institutions can be compromised and used as tools for political survival.

- ❖ **Zuma's Allegations and the Delays in Prosecution.** Zuma's corruption charges stemmed from allegations that he received bribes from arms dealers in exchange for facilitating favorable deals. Despite these allegations emerging in the early 2000s, Zuma was not formally charged until 2005. This delay is critical in understanding how the NPA, which was supposed to act as an independent body, became embroiled in political struggles. The NPA initially dropped the charges against Zuma in 2007, citing insufficient evidence, a move that sparked accusations of political interference. Zuma's political allies, including some within the NPA, were suspected of influencing this decision, raising concerns about the politicization of the criminal justice system. When Zuma became president in 2009, the charges were reinstated, highlighting the political dynamics at play. Critics argued that Zuma used his political power to influence legal proceedings, and the inconsistent handling of the case dropping and later reinstating charges fueled suspicions of the NPA being used for political protection. This case illustrates how legal institutions can be shaped by political forces, blurring the lines between law and politics.
- ❖ **Political Maneuvering and the Manipulation of Legal Processes.** Throughout his presidency, Zuma used a range of legal strategies to delay, deflect, and delegitimize the legal process. His legal team constantly challenged the legitimacy of the charges and accused the NPA of bias, further complicating efforts to pursue justice. From a political criminology perspective, these delays represented a deliberate attempt to shield Zuma from accountability, allowing him to maintain political power while evading legal consequences. The NPA itself, under Zuma's administration, faced intense political pressure, leading to accusations of institutional weakness and political interference. One of the most notable examples of this was the dismissal of Vusi Pikoli, the NPA head, in 2008. Pikoli had attempted to press charges against Zuma, but his efforts were perceived as a threat to Zuma's political power, leading to his removal. This event exemplified how the NPA was politicized, transforming from an independent institution into a tool for political control and protection of the ruling elite.
- ❖ **The Weaponization of the Legal System.** Zuma's ability to manipulate the legal system reflected broader issues within South Africa's post-apartheid political culture. Personal interests, political loyalty, and legal accountability often overlapped, leading to accusations that the NPA was not upholding justice, but instead serving as a political instrument. Zuma's legal battles were not merely about personal misconduct but highlighted the systemic weaknesses within South Africa's political and legal structures, where political elites were able to influence legal outcomes. Moreover, Zuma's repeated claims of political bias in the legal system allowed him to frame his legal challenges as part of a broader political conspiracy. This narrative of victimhood resonated with some sections of the South African public, further polarizing the political climate and delegitimizing the legal process in the eyes of his supporters. By framing his legal battles as politically motivated, Zuma undermined public trust in the criminal justice system, complicating efforts to hold him accountable.
- ❖ **Zuma's Legal Struggles Post-Presidency.** After Zuma's presidency ended in 2018, his legal battles did not cease. In 2021, he was convicted of contempt of court for refusing to testify at the Zondo Commission, a state capture inquiry. This marked a significant moment in the ongoing struggle between political elites and the criminal justice system. Zuma's legal challenges continued to dominate public discourse, highlighting the persistent tension between the rule of law and political power in South Africa. The case of Jacob Zuma and the NPA exemplifies the ways in which legal systems can be manipulated for political ends. Through the politicization of the NPA, Zuma was able to shield himself from prosecution for years, using legal delays and challenges to avoid accountability. Political criminology provides valuable insight into the role of state institutions in maintaining power, demonstrating how legal processes can be weaponized to serve political

interests. Zuma's case highlights the fragility of institutional safeguards in transitioning democracies, where the manipulation of legal frameworks can undermine the pursuit of justice and accountability (Qikani & Masumbe, 2024).

### **Case Study 8: Brazil's Lava Jato State Oil Company Petrobras: Scandal and Subsequent Constitutional Reforms**

The Lava Jato scandal, also known as Operation Car Wash, and the subsequent constitutional reforms in Brazil provide a significant case study in political criminology, illustrating the intersection of state power, corruption, and the manipulation of legal frameworks to influence political institutions and power dynamics. The scandal, which began as a money-laundering investigation in 2014, uncovered a vast network of corruption that implicated Brazil's political and business elite, especially centered around the state oil company Petrobras. From a political criminology perspective, the case reveals how political elites and state institutions can become intertwined, facilitating corruption and hindering the pursuit of justice.

- ❖ **The Lava Jato Investigation and Political Corruption.** Lava Jato exposed widespread corruption within Brazil's political system, with politicians, business executives, and public officials colluding to funnel state funds for private gain. Central to the scandal was Petrobras, where large kickbacks were funneled to political parties in exchange for lucrative contracts. This deep-rooted corruption revealed how key state institutions state-owned enterprises, political parties, and the judiciary had been co-opted for personal and party political gain, using state power to facilitate illegal activities rather than upholding justice. From a political criminology perspective, Lava Jato highlights how legal processes and institutions can be manipulated by political elites to protect their interests and avoid accountability. Despite the investigation's goal to restore the rule of law, it became clear that political motivations influenced the prosecution of certain individuals, raising questions about the impartiality of the criminal justice system.
- ❖ **Judicial Bias and Political Manipulation.** The judicial system's role in Lava Jato was particularly contentious, with key figures such as Sérgio Moro, the judge overseeing the case, becoming central to the investigation's public profile. Moro's close ties with political figures, particularly after he became Minister of Justice under President Jair Bolsonaro, led to concerns about judicial bias and the politicization of the legal process. One of the most controversial aspects of the scandal was the arrest and conviction of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a leading political figure and rival to the incumbent government. The timing of Lula's conviction, particularly as it occurred during a critical election period, raised suspicions that the legal system was being used to prevent him from running for president in 2018. These events exemplify the use of legal mechanisms as a political tool, where the criminal justice system was manipulated to achieve specific political outcomes. The legal process surrounding Lula's case, including allegations of judicial bias and political interference, sparked widespread debate about the integrity of Brazil's judiciary. The strategic use of the legal system to target political opponents, especially during election cycles, underscores key concerns in political criminology about the use of state power to suppress political rivals and manipulate public opinion.
- ❖ **Political and Economic Consequences.** The Lava Jato scandal had profound consequences on Brazil's political landscape, triggering widespread political disillusionment. Many citizens began to view the political system as irredeemably corrupt, leading to a deep erosion of trust in political institutions. The scandal also revealed vulnerabilities in Brazil's democracy, where entrenched corruption and political manipulation were capable of undermining the legitimacy of democratic processes. In response, there were calls for comprehensive reforms aimed at tackling corruption and increasing transparency. These calls led to a series of constitutional amendments and legal changes, which some viewed as efforts to address the systemic corruption exposed by Lava Jato. However, political criminology can critique whether these reforms were genuinely transformative or merely designed to consolidate political control. Critics argue that some of these reforms centralized power in the executive branch, which raised concerns about potential authoritarian tendencies. Additionally, there were fears that the reforms would protect powerful elites while continuing to target lower-level actors and political opponents, thus preserving the status quo rather than addressing the root causes of corruption.
- ❖ **Populist Rhetoric and the Political Use of Legal Reforms.** The Lava Jato scandal also coincided with the rise of populist rhetoric, particularly with the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. Bolsonaro capitalized on public outrage over corruption, promising to root out the problem and restore order. His election was, in part, fueled by dissatisfaction with the political establishment and the perceived failure of previous governments to tackle corruption. However, once in power, Bolsonaro's administration was criticized for undermining democratic institutions and for using the legal system to further its political agenda, mirroring the actions of previous administrations. The Lava Jato investigation, once a rallying cry for accountability, became entangled in political power struggles. Populist leaders, like Bolsonaro, used the scandal to consolidate their own political power, but also faced accusations of undermining the very institutions they claimed to be defending. This dynamic reflects how legal processes and populist rhetoric can be co-opted to further political goals, complicating efforts to address systemic corruption. The Lava Jato scandal, along with the subsequent legal and constitutional reforms, offers a profound insight into the intersection of politics, corruption, and the manipulation of the legal system in Brazil. It demonstrates how corruption can become normalized within a



political system, how state institutions can be manipulated to shield political elites from accountability, and how legal reforms can be co-opted to strengthen political control rather than promote real change. The case highlights the fragility of democratic institutions in the face of corruption and political manipulation, illustrating the challenges of balancing accountability with political power in a democracy. The Brazilian experience underscores key concerns in political criminology, including the role of legal systems in protecting or undermining democratic principles, and the ways in which political elites can use the law to their advantage (Neto & Santiago, 2024).

### **Case Study 9: Hungary's Constitutional Changes under Orbán's Government: Replaced Hungary's Constitution WITH a New Fundamental Law**

Hungary's constitutional changes under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's leadership offer a crucial case study in political criminology, illustrating how legal and political structures can be manipulated to consolidate state power, suppress opposition, and weaken democratic checks and balances. Orbán's reforms, implemented gradually since 2010, exemplify how political actors can use legal instruments to reshape the political landscape, often under the guise of national interest or democratic reform. These constitutional amendments have far-reaching implications for the rule of law, judicial independence, and political pluralism.

- ❖ **Orbán's Centralization of Power.** In 2011, Orbán's government replaced Hungary's constitution with a new Fundamental Law, which, while retaining some elements of the original, significantly centralized power in the executive branch. This new legal framework granted Orbán greater control over crucial state institutions, including the judiciary, media, and civil society organizations. Critics argue that these changes were designed to entrench Orbán's power, erode democratic institutions, and subordinate the rule of law to political interests. From a political criminology perspective, the constitutional reforms exemplify how legal systems can be used by the ruling party to suppress opposition and limit scrutiny of its policies. Orbán's control over Hungary's parliament enabled his government to enact constitutional changes that shifted the balance of power, especially by altering the composition of the Constitutional Court. This allowed Orbán to appoint loyalists to key judicial positions, limiting the court's capacity to act as an independent check on executive power. These changes significantly weakened the judiciary's ability to review and challenge the government's actions, enabling Orbán's administration to act with minimal oversight. This centralization of power exemplifies the ways in which state institutions can be manipulated to benefit political elites, facilitating their ability to implement policies that align with their interests while silencing dissent.
- ❖ **Undermining Political Opposition and Civil Society.** One of the primary goals of Orbán's constitutional reforms was to weaken opposition parties and suppress civil society organizations that criticized his government. A key example is the 2017 "Stop Soros" law, which targeted non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that supported refugees or opposed the government's immigration policies. This law imposed severe restrictions on NGOs, portraying them as foreign agents undermining Hungary's national interests. By suppressing civil society, Orbán's government not only limited the scope for political opposition but also used the legal system to delegitimize and silence critics. Moreover, Orbán's government actively reshaped the judiciary to ensure that courts were less likely to challenge government policies. By appointing loyalists to key judicial positions and limiting the power of judicial review, Orbán created an environment where the courts could no longer function as a neutral check on executive power. This manipulation of the judiciary allowed the government to avoid accountability for policies that violated human rights or contradicted democratic principles.
- ❖ **Control of the Media and Shaping Public Opinion.** A critical aspect of Orbán's consolidation of power was his control over Hungary's media landscape. His government has created a pro-government media conglomerate that dominates the press and broadcasting, limiting independent journalism. Orbán's administration also passed laws restricting foreign ownership of media, further stifling the diversity of viewpoints in the country. In political criminological terms, controlling the media is an essential tool for constructing a "political narrative" that reinforces the government's legitimacy and marginalizes opposition voices. By controlling the media, Orbán has been able to shape public opinion and present himself as the defender of Hungarian sovereignty, while framing opposition as unpatriotic or anti-national. This media control allows the government to suppress dissent, manipulate public discourse, and maintain its hold on power, while presenting an image of democratic legitimacy despite the erosion of democratic norms.
- ❖ **Resisting External Criticism and Building Domestic Legitimacy.** Orbán's constitutional changes have drawn significant criticism from the European Union (EU) and international human rights organizations, who view them as a shift toward authoritarianism. However, Orbán has effectively used his domestic political support to deflect this external criticism. By positioning himself as a Defender of Hungary's National Sovereignty, particularly against the EU's perceived encroachment on Hungary's internal affairs, Orbán has

been able to build domestic legitimacy for his reforms. He portrays his government's actions as necessary to preserve Hungary's autonomy, even as these actions undermine democratic norms. From a political criminology perspective, Orbán's strategic use of constitutional reforms to resist external pressure highlights how leaders can use legal means to consolidate power and control domestic politics. By framing his government as the protector of national interests, Orbán justifies the erosion of democratic principles, portraying legal and constitutional changes as necessary for safeguarding Hungary's future, while simultaneously curbing accountability and democratic oversight. Hungary's constitutional changes under Orbán's government provide a striking example of how legal frameworks can be manipulated to consolidate power, suppress political opposition, and weaken democratic institutions. Orbán's use of constitutional reforms to centralize power in the executive branch, diminish judicial independence, control the media, and limit civil society illustrates the potential dangers of using the legal system as a tool for political control. The case of Hungary raises critical questions about the role of the state in safeguarding democracy and the rule of law. Orbán's government has demonstrated how state power can be used to undermine democratic norms, limit civil rights, and perpetuate the interests of a ruling elite, all while presenting the changes as necessary for national sovereignty and economic stability (Bozóki & Benedek, 2024).

#### **Case Study 10: Russia's Judicial Reforms and Putin's Consolidation of Power: Eroded the Judiciary's Independence**

Russia's judicial reforms under Vladimir Putin provide a significant example of how political leaders can manipulate legal and institutional frameworks to reinforce their control over the state and suppress opposition. Since Putin's rise to power in 1999, the judiciary has undergone a series of reforms that have significantly diminished its independence, transforming it into a tool for consolidating authority in the executive branch. These changes have allowed Putin to centralize power, eliminate political opposition, and circumvent accountability, illustrating how legal systems can be manipulated for authoritarian purposes.

- ❖ **Centralization of Power in the Judiciary.** One of the most significant aspects of Putin's judicial reforms has been the increasing centralization of power in the presidency. Initially, Russia sought to modernize its judicial system in response to inefficiency and corruption, but these reforms have often been superficial, aimed more at creating the appearance of a functional rule of law than ensuring genuine judicial independence. Putin's government has gradually eroded the judiciary's independence by appointing loyalists to key judicial positions, aligning the courts with the interests of the state and the Kremlin. As a result, the judiciary has become an extension of Putin's personal and political power, with judges often under pressure to rule in ways that support the government's agenda. This alignment of the judiciary with the executive branch has significantly weakened the judiciary's role as a check on executive power, enabling Putin to govern with minimal oversight. High-profile political trials, such as those involving opposition leaders, independent journalists, and activists, underscore how the legal system has been turned into a tool of political repression. The case of Alexei Navalny, a prominent opposition figure imprisoned on politically motivated charges, exemplifies how the judiciary has been employed to neutralize political rivals, ensuring that legal processes serve the regime's interests rather than the pursuit of justice (Chistyakova, 2024).
- ❖ **Criminalizing Dissent and Political Opposition.** Putin's legal reforms have also focused on criminalizing dissent and limiting freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Laws introduced under Putin's rule, such as those labeling certain organizations as "undesirable" or "foreign agents," have provided a legal framework for persecuting opposition groups, civil society organizations, and journalists who challenge the government. These legal changes have allowed the state to justify the repression of opposition movements while maintaining the appearance of legal legitimacy. The legal system has thus become a tool for consolidating state power by stifling meaningful political dissent and ensuring that any opposition is systematically marginalized or criminalized. From a political criminology perspective, these reforms are not only aimed at preventing challenges to the regime but also at legitimizing the use of state power to suppress opposition. By controlling the judiciary, the regime ensures that political opponents face legal consequences for challenging the government, further consolidating Putin's control over the political system. These measures also demonstrate how state power can be wielded to protect the political elite from accountability while punishing those who threaten the status quo.
- ❖ **Corruption and the Unequal Application of the Law.** The manipulation of the judiciary also plays a key role in perpetuating a system of corruption in Russia. The courts have been used to resolve disputes in favor of the political elite, enabling the continuation of state-sponsored corruption. Business leaders or individuals who fall out of favor with the Kremlin often find themselves entangled in legal battles that disproportionately benefit the state. Meanwhile, those who remain loyal to Putin's regime are shielded from legal consequences, reinforcing a system where legal outcomes are shaped by political loyalty rather than objective justice. This manipulation of the legal system fosters a political environment where the law is applied selectively, protecting the interests of the ruling elite while punishing dissent. The judiciary thus becomes an instrument not of justice but of political control, reinforcing the concentration of power in the hands of a few and ensuring that the political and economic elite are insulated from legal scrutiny.

- ❖ **Controlling the Political Environment through Legal Means.** Putin's judicial reforms have also transformed the judiciary into a mechanism for controlling Russia's political environment. The manipulation of the legal system has made it increasingly difficult for opposition parties, civil society organizations, and independent media outlets to operate freely. Legal challenges are frequently used to prevent opposition leaders from running for office or engaging in political activism, effectively neutralizing any potential threats to Putin's rule. These reforms ensure that political challenges are swiftly neutralized, making it nearly impossible for independent political movements or the judiciary to function effectively. The legal system is no longer seen as a guardian of democratic principles or the rule of law but as an extension of the regime's power, subordinating legal norms to the needs of the ruling elite.
- ❖ **Implications for International Relations.** Russia's judicial reforms have significant implications for the country's relations with the international community. Western governments, human rights organizations, and international legal bodies have criticized Russia for its lack of judicial independence and the politicization of its legal system. However, Putin's ability to centralize power and manipulate the judiciary has allowed him to maintain a semblance of legal legitimacy despite widespread criticisms of his government's human rights record. Through state-controlled media and the manipulation of legal frameworks, the Russian government has been able to deflect international criticism and justify its repressive measures. By presenting itself as a defender of national sovereignty, Russia's leadership has managed to control its political narrative, ensuring that criticisms of its legal system and human rights abuses are largely ignored or dismissed. Russia's judicial reforms under Putin's government highlight the ways in which legal and institutional frameworks can be manipulated to consolidate power, suppress opposition, and protect the interests of the political elite. By centralizing control over the judiciary, criminalizing dissent, and fostering corruption, Putin has transformed the legal system into a tool of political control, ensuring that legal outcomes serve the regime's agenda rather than the pursuit of justice. This case underscores the role of the judiciary in maintaining or undermining democratic norms and raises important questions about the relationship between law and power in authoritarian regimes (Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia et al., 2024).

**Case Study 11: "Third-Rate Burglary," The Watergate Scandal (1972-1974): Series of Illegal Activities and Cover-ups Involving High-Ranking Officials within the Nixon Administration.**

The Watergate scandal stands as one of the most consequential political events in American history, leading to the resignation of President Richard Nixon and revealing the extent of corruption and abuse of power within the U.S. government. The scandal centered around a break-in at the Democratic National Committee's headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C., on June 17, 1972. Initially downplayed as a simple burglary, it eventually unraveled into a vast series of illegal activities and cover-ups involving high-ranking officials within the Nixon administration.

- ❖ **The Break-In and Initial Cover-Up.** On the night of June 17, five men were arrested while attempting to wiretap the Democratic National Committee offices and steal sensitive documents. These burglars had connections to Nixon's re-election campaign, the Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP), raising immediate questions about the political motives behind the break-in. The arrested men, including former CIA and FBI agents, were quickly linked to the Nixon campaign, suggesting that the break-in was part of a broader effort to undermine Nixon's political opponents. In the aftermath of the break-in, Nixon's administration sought to downplay the event. Initially described as a "Third-Rate Burglary," the White House attempted to minimize the significance of the incident. However, as investigators delved deeper into the case, it became clear that the break-in was part of a much larger campaign of illegal activities orchestrated by Nixon's inner circle to spy on and sabotage political rivals.
- ❖ **The Extent of the Cover-Up and Illegal Activities.** The Watergate scandal expanded as evidence emerged that the Nixon administration had engaged in a wide range of illegal activities. These included wiretapping, surveillance of political opponents, and attempts to discredit journalists. As the investigation progressed, it became clear that the cover-up was just as significant as the original break-in. Senior officials within the Nixon administration, including Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and White House Counsel John Dean, obstructed the FBI's investigation by invoking national security concerns, despite the lack of a legitimate threat. In addition to the cover-up, the Nixon administration had engaged in illegal activities aimed at sabotaging the campaigns of political opponents. These included using the IRS to harass enemies, illegal surveillance of journalists, and espionage operations targeting Democratic candidates. As these revelations came to light, it became apparent that a network of White House officials had been complicit in the crimes.
- ❖ **The Role of Investigative Journalism.** The press played a pivotal role in exposing the scandal. Investigative journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post uncovered critical information that connected the break-in to the Nixon campaign. Their reporting, aided by an anonymous whistleblower known as "Deep Throat," revealed that the break-in was part of a larger, coordinated effort to subvert the political process. Woodward and Bernstein's tireless investigation brought the scandal into the public spotlight, and their work was instrumental in maintaining public interest despite attempts by the Nixon administration to downplay the event.

- ❖ **The Senate Investigation and Revelations.** In 1973, the U.S. Senate launched its own investigation into Watergate, with a special committee led by Senator Sam Ervin. The televised hearings captivated the nation, exposing a wide range of illegal activities and leading to key testimonies, including that of John Dean, who implicated Nixon in the cover-up. The investigation uncovered the existence of a secret taping system in the White House, which recorded conversations in the Oval Office, including a crucial tape from June 23, 1972. This tape revealed Nixon's involvement in obstructing the FBI's investigation, which contradicted his earlier claims of ignorance. The discovery of the tapes was a turning point in the scandal. Known as the "smoking gun," the tapes provided undeniable proof of Nixon's complicity in the cover-up, which led to mounting political pressure for his resignation.
- ❖ **Impeachment and Nixon's Resignation.** As the investigation advanced, evidence against Nixon became overwhelming. On July 27, 1974, the House Judiciary Committee passed three articles of impeachment: obstruction of justice, abuse of power, and contempt of Congress. With impeachment all but certain, Nixon chose to resign on August 8, 1974, becoming the first U.S. president to step down under threat of impeachment. The following day, Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as president.
- ❖ **Ford's Pardon and Public Reaction.** In the aftermath of Nixon's resignation, President Ford controversially pardoned Nixon for any crimes he may have committed while in office. Ford argued that the pardon was necessary to heal the nation and move beyond the scandal. However, the decision sparked public resentment, as many felt Nixon should have been held accountable for his actions. Ford's pardon further deepened the national divide over Watergate, adding to the scandal's lasting impact.
- ❖ **Long-Term Effects of Watergate.** The Watergate scandal had profound and lasting effects on American politics. It exposed the dangers of unchecked executive power and illustrated how corruption at the highest levels of government could undermine democracy. In response to the scandal, Congress enacted a series of reforms aimed at increasing transparency and accountability, including stricter campaign finance laws and measures to improve oversight of the executive branch. Watergate also had a lasting impact on public trust in government, with the scandal contributing to a decline in trust that would persist for years. The role of investigative journalism was further solidified, as Woodward and Bernstein became national heroes for their role in uncovering the truth. The scandal highlighted the importance of a free and independent press in holding powerful institutions accountable. The Watergate scandal was a defining moment in American political history. It demonstrated the dangers of corruption, abuse of power, and the willingness of those in positions of authority to subvert the rule of law. The scandal not only led to the resignation of a president but also resulted in lasting reforms aimed at preserving democratic principles. Watergate continues to serve as a cautionary tale about the need for vigilance and accountability in government, and the importance of a free press in ensuring that those in power are held to account (Collins, 2016).

#### **Case Study 12: Trump-Ukraine Scandal (2019): Nearly \$400 Million in Military Aid to Ukraine to Investigate his Political Rival**

The Trump-Ukraine scandal of 2019 was a defining event in U.S. political history, leading to the impeachment of President Donald Trump. It centered around a phone call on July 25, 2019, where Trump allegedly pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate his political rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden's business dealings in Ukraine.

- ❖ **Whistleblower Complaint and Initial Allegations.** The controversy began in August 2019 with a whistleblower complaint, which accused Trump of using presidential powers to secure political benefits. The complaint highlighted the withholding of nearly \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine, which Trump allegedly conditioned on Zelensky agreeing to investigate the Bidens.
- ❖ **Testimonies from U.S. Diplomats and Officials.** As the scandal unfolded, several U.S. diplomats, including Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch and top diplomat William Taylor, testified about the negative impact of Trump's actions on U.S. foreign policy and national security. Yovanovitch's removal from her post was linked to her resistance to Trump's pressure on Ukraine.
- ❖ **The Role of Rudy Giuliani in the Scandal.** Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, played a significant role by traveling to Ukraine to encourage officials to launch investigations into the Bidens. His involvement raised concerns as he was operating outside official diplomatic channels and appeared to be advancing Trump's personal political agenda.
- ❖ **Trump's Defense and Denial of Wrongdoing.** In response to the allegations, Trump denied any misconduct, referring to his phone call with Zelensky as "perfect." He claimed that he only asked Zelensky to address corruption in Ukraine, not to target Biden. Trump characterized the impeachment inquiry as a politically motivated attack by Democrats.
- ❖ **Impeachment Process and Senate Trial.** In December 2019, the House of Representatives approved two articles of impeachment against Trump: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The case then moved to the Senate, where, despite overwhelming evidence, the Republican-controlled Senate acquitted Trump on both charges, with only Senator Mitt Romney voting to convict him.
- ❖ **Impact of the Scandal on American Politics.** Though Trump was acquitted, the Trump-Ukraine scandal had lasting effects on American politics. It exposed partisan divides, raised concerns about the abuse of presidential

power, and highlighted the risks of foreign interference in U.S. elections. The scandal became a focal point in the 2020 presidential election, with Biden's candidacy serving as a key issue in the ongoing political conflict. Despite the acquittal, the scandal remains a significant example of the complex relationship between executive power, political advantage, and its consequences on the political system.

**Case Study 13: UK Phone Hacking Scandal (2005-2011): News of the World was Shut Down in July 2011 after 168 Years of Operations**

- ❖ **Overview of the UK Phone Hacking Scandal.** The UK phone hacking scandal, which unfolded between 2005 and 2011, was one of the most significant breaches of journalistic ethics and privacy in modern British history. It involved the illegal interception of private phone conversations by journalists, primarily from News of the World, a British tabloid newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. The scandal resulted in the newspaper's closure, a public inquiry into press standards, and major reforms in media regulation.
- ❖ **Beginning of the Scandal and Initial Discoveries.** The phone hacking began in the mid-2000s, when journalists at News of the World used the illegal interception of phone calls to obtain information for sensational stories. Initially thought to involve just a few rogue reporters, investigations later revealed that phone hacking was a widespread practice, involving senior editors and executives within the organization. The targets included high-profile figures, such as celebrities, politicians, and members of the royal family, as well as ordinary citizens, including crime victims.
- ❖ **Milly Dowler's Case and the National Outcry.** The scandal escalated after the phone of Milly Dowler, a missing 13-year-old girl, was hacked in 2002. Journalists intercepted her voicemails and even deleted messages to create a false impression that she was still alive. This revelation caused widespread public outrage, as it highlighted the invasion of privacy of grieving families and the unethical practices of the press.
- ❖ **The Guardian Investigation and Full Exposure of the Scandal.** In 2010, The Guardian newspaper began a comprehensive investigation into the hacking practices, uncovering evidence that the practice was more widespread than previously thought. It revealed that senior editors and executives at News of the World were involved, and that payments had been made to private investigators to access phone records, indicating a coordinated effort to gather information illegally.
- ❖ **The Hacking of Crime Victims' Phones and Escalating Public Pressure.** Further revelations emerged, including the hacking of the phones of crime victims, such as relatives of those killed in the 7/7 London bombings. These new revelations intensified the public outcry, as it became clear that vulnerable individuals were being exploited for sensationalist news stories. The scandal led to widespread calls for accountability, with arrests of key figures in the newspaper's leadership.
- ❖ **The Leveson Inquiry and Recommendations for Reform.** In response to the scandal, the UK government appointed the Leveson Inquiry in late 2011. The inquiry was tasked with investigating the scale of phone hacking and recommending stronger press regulations. It concluded that phone hacking was part of a broader culture of unethical behavior within the press. It also recommended the establishment of an independent body to oversee the press, aimed at protecting privacy, especially for celebrities, politicians, and crime victims.
- ❖ **Challenges to Reform and Aftermath of the Scandal.** Despite the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry, the implementation of reforms faced significant resistance, particularly from the press and political figures who expressed concern over the impact on press freedom. In the wake of the scandal, News of the World was shut down in July 2011 after 168 years of operation. News Corporation, Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate, faced significant legal challenges, and the scandal caused a severe erosion of public trust.
- ❖ **Legacy and Impact of the Phone Hacking Scandal.** The phone hacking scandal had far-reaching consequences for the media industry, leading to major reforms in press regulation. It raised critical questions about the balance between press freedom and privacy, as well as the dangers of unchecked power within the media. The scandal left a lasting legacy, emphasizing the need for more accountability in journalism and highlighting the influence of powerful media moguls in shaping public discourse.

**Case Study 14: Dutch Banking Scandal (2008-2010): Dutch Financial Institutions in Facilitating Tax Evasion, Money Laundering, and Other Financial Crimes**

- ❖ **Overview of the Scandal.** The Dutch banking scandal, which unfolded between 2008 and 2010, exposed the involvement of major Dutch financial institutions in facilitating tax evasion, money laundering, and other financial crimes. Prominent Dutch banks, including ABN AMRO and ING, were accused of assisting wealthy individuals and corporations in hiding assets, evading taxes, and moving illicit funds across borders. The scandal had significant consequences for the Dutch banking sector, global financial systems, and regulatory frameworks, sparking public outrage and calls for stricter regulations.
- ❖ **Key Players and Allegations.** The origins of the scandal stemmed from the activities of some of the Netherlands' largest financial institutions. These banks were alleged to have knowingly facilitated tax evasion and money laundering by setting up offshore accounts and shell companies for clients, often in jurisdictions with lax regulatory frameworks, such as the Cayman Islands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. These offshore accounts made it difficult for authorities to track and trace financial assets and movements.

- ❖ **Money Laundering and Corruption.** The role of Dutch banks in money laundering became more evident as investigations revealed the methods used to move illicit funds across borders. The banks were accused of providing financial services that helped criminals, drug cartels, and corrupt government officials launder money and hide the proceeds of illegal activities. Multi-layered financial structures, shell companies, and trust funds were used to make it extremely difficult for authorities to trace the origins and destinations of illicit funds.
- ❖ **Investigations and Revelations.** The scandal first came to public attention in 2008 when the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant uncovered evidence that ABN AMRO and other banks had helped clients set up secret offshore accounts and financial structures. In 2009, an internal audit by the Dutch central bank revealed that several major financial institutions had violated anti-money laundering (AML) regulations, failing to vet clients or report suspicious transactions to authorities. This failure of oversight allowed financial crimes to continue unchecked, revealing weaknesses within the Dutch financial system.
- ❖ **Reputational Impact and Government Response.** The scandal had serious consequences for the reputation of Dutch banks and their role in the global financial system. The Netherlands, once viewed as a stable and reputable financial center, faced widespread criticism. The scandal put pressure on the Dutch government to reform, as many critics argued that it had failed to adequately monitor its financial institutions and ensure they adhered to international standards on tax evasion and money laundering. In response to the scandal, the Dutch government initiated investigations into the banks involved and passed new legislation in 2010 to improve financial transparency and increase penalties for financial institutions engaged in money laundering and tax evasion. These reforms aimed to align the Netherlands with international anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) standards.
- ❖ **Legal Consequences.** As a result of the scandal, ABN AMRO and ING were fined for non-compliance with AML regulations, and several employees from these banks were investigated and prosecuted. The legal and financial consequences were significant, with the institutions facing reputational damage and a decline in business as clients grew wary of their involvement in illicit activities.
- ❖ **Global Implications.** The Dutch banking scandal also had broader implications for the international banking community. It underscored the need for tighter oversight and regulation of financial institutions and highlighted the ease with which banks could exploit regulatory loopholes to facilitate illegal activity. The scandal spurred international efforts to combat tax evasion and money laundering, with a renewed focus on the role of offshore financial centers and the need for global coordination to close regulatory gaps. The Dutch banking scandal of 2008-2010 revealed the vulnerabilities within the global financial system and the potential for exploitation by powerful financial institutions. It exposed how regulatory weaknesses allowed financial crimes to thrive on a massive scale. The fallout from the scandal led to significant reforms in both national and international financial regulations, reinforcing the need for rigorous standards to prevent illicit financial activity. The case serves as a reminder of the challenges in policing the global financial system and the importance of maintaining strong regulatory frameworks to prevent the abuse of financial power.

**Case Study 15: In U.S. Prosecution of Senator Ted Stevens (2008), The Longest Serving Republican Senator in Alaska's History, - Misconduct by Federal Prosecutors**

- ❖ **Overview of the Case.** In 2008, the prosecution of U.S. Senator Ted Stevens, the longest serving Republican senator in Alaska's history, became a major controversy in American legal and political history. Stevens was convicted on seven felony counts of failing to report gifts, totaling more than \$250,000, that he had received from VECO Corporation, a major oil company. However, the case became tainted by accusations of misconduct and unethical behavior by the federal prosecutors handling the investigation, raising significant questions about the fairness of the trial.
- ❖ **Background and Allegations.** The investigation into Stevens began in 2006 as part of a broader inquiry into political corruption in Alaska. Federal authorities focused on Stevens' connections to VECO, which had long been involved in Alaska's oil industry. The company allegedly provided Stevens with home renovations, including electrical work, plumbing, and other improvements, without reporting them as required by law. The prosecution argued that Stevens intentionally failed to disclose these gifts on his financial forms, violating federal law. Stevens, however, denied the charges, maintaining that the renovations had been offered by VECO's executives as part of a longstanding personal relationship and were not intended as bribes.
- ❖ **Trial and Prosecutorial Misconduct.** The trial became highly publicized as Stevens defended his innocence against the serious charges. However, as the case unfolded, it became apparent that there were serious issues with how evidence was handled by the prosecution. Stevens' defense team discovered that crucial exculpatory evidence, which could have potentially exonerated him, was withheld by federal prosecutors. This included testimonies and documents that could have undermined the prosecution's case and raised doubts about the credibility of key witnesses. One of the most significant revelations was that lead prosecutor Brenda Morris had misrepresented the handling of evidence. She failed to inform the court about the withheld exculpatory materials and misled the judge about the extent of evidence shared with Stevens' legal team. These actions raised serious concerns about the integrity of the trial and the fairness of the judicial process.

- ❖ **Political Motivation and Public Backlash.** Critics of the prosecution argued that the case against Stevens may have been politically motivated, as he was facing re-election at the time. The prosecution could have been seen as an attempt to weaken his chances in the race. Public criticism grew as more evidence of prosecutorial misconduct came to light, and questions were raised about whether Stevens had been denied a fair trial.
- ❖ **Investigation and Legal Repercussions.** In response to the growing concerns, the Department of Justice (DOJ) initiated an internal review of the case. In April 2009, Attorney General Eric Holder appointed a special prosecutor to investigate the handling of the case. The review confirmed that significant errors had been made, including the improper withholding of evidence, and concluded that the prosecution's actions had led to a miscarriage of justice. As a result, the DOJ took the unprecedented step of moving to vacate Stevens' conviction. In April 2009, the DOJ dropped all charges against Stevens and sought to have the verdict overturned due to the prosecutorial misconduct that tainted the trial. The government's decision to dismiss the charges was based on the findings of the internal review, which concluded that Stevens had been denied a fair trial.
- ❖ **Political and Career Impact.** Although Stevens was exonerated in 2009, the damage to his political career was irreversible. Despite his eventual acquittal, Stevens lost his re-election bid in 2008 to Democrat Mark Begich, with many seeing his defeat as a political consequence of the scandal. The trial had severely undermined Stevens' re-election chances, and the case remained a significant stain on his political legacy.
- ❖ **Implications for Prosecutorial Ethics and Legal Reforms.** The case raised important questions about prosecutorial ethics, especially in politically sensitive cases involving powerful public figures. The misconduct of the prosecution team violated Stevens' constitutional rights and underscored the dangers of politicized prosecutions. Critics argued that the federal authorities had been too eager to secure a conviction, driven by the public pressure to hold a prominent politician accountable. Following the case, several members of the prosecution team, including lead prosecutor Brenda Morris, faced disciplinary action. However, no criminal charges were brought against them. The case prompted calls for greater oversight of federal prosecutors and reforms to ensure greater fairness and transparency in politically sensitive legal cases. The prosecution of Ted Stevens serves as a cautionary tale about the risks of prosecutorial misconduct, particularly in cases involving high-profile political figures. While Stevens was posthumously exonerated after his tragic death in a 2010 plane crash, the case highlighted the need for safeguards to ensure fairness in the legal process. It reinforced the importance of prosecutorial integrity, ethical standards, and transparency to maintain public trust in the justice system and avoid future miscarriages of justice in politically charged cases.

#### **Case Study 16: France: Clearstream Affair (2001-2009) – Judicial Harassment of Politicians**

The Clearstream Affair, which spanned from 2001 to 2009, was one of the most significant political scandals in recent French history, involving money laundering, political corruption, and judicial misconduct. The affair revolved around Clearstream, a financial services company that became the center of allegations involving illicit financial activities and the manipulation of judicial processes for political purposes.

- ❖ **The Origins of the Affair.** The Clearstream Affair began in 2001 when French investigative judge Renaud van Ruymbeke launched an investigation into suspicious financial transactions tied to Clearstream. The company, known for clearing international financial transactions, was accused of laundering money and concealing illegal activities, including bribery and illegal arms trading. In 2001, a report surfaced suggesting that Clearstream was used to hide bribes to political figures and businessmen.
- ❖ **The Whistleblower and the Alleged List of Politicians.** In 2004, an anonymous whistleblower named "Kilogram" sent a letter to van Ruymbeke with a list of names allegedly linked to secret Clearstream accounts. The list included prominent politicians, such as former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and then-senior government official Nicolas Sarkozy, as well as businessmen tied to the political elite. The whistleblower claimed these individuals were involved in illicit financial activities.
- ❖ **The Political Context and Judicial Battle.** The investigation quickly gained media attention and became a political and judicial battleground. The timing of the affair raised suspicions that it might have been politically motivated, especially considering the rivalry between President Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy. Villepin, who was a key government figure, became a target of public scrutiny, with media speculating that the affair was part of a plot to undermine his political career.
- ❖ **The Role of False Documents and Political Maneuvering.** In 2006, the investigation took a dramatic turn when it was revealed that several key figures had fabricated documents to mislead the judge and the public. Jean-Louis Gergorin, a French financier with personal grievances against Villepin, was accused of creating false documents to implicate political rivals. These revelations led to legal battles, including charges against Villepin for complicity in attempting to frame Sarkozy and other political figures.

- ❖ **Legal Proceedings and Fallout.** In 2009, after a lengthy legal process, the French courts acquitted Villepin of the charges, ruling that there was insufficient evidence to prove his involvement in a plot to discredit Sarkozy. Despite this, the affair had a profound impact on both Villepin's and Sarkozy's political careers, as public perceptions of both men had been irrevocably altered. Villepin's political career was severely damaged, and Sarkozy faced lasting suspicions despite his exoneration.
- ❖ **Judicial Harassment and Political Manipulation.** The Clearstream Affair exposed how judicial processes could be exploited and manipulated for political purposes. Many critics argued that the affair represented judicial harassment where the legal system was used as a tool in political warfare. Although the investigation raised genuine concerns about corruption and financial misconduct, the affair was also seen as an attempt to use the judiciary to undermine political rivals.
- ❖ **Impact on Judicial Independence and Public Trust.** The affair highlighted broader issues of judicial independence and the integrity of the French legal system. It raised important questions about whether the judiciary should be used for political purposes and whether high-profile figures could manipulate legal processes to serve their political interests. The Clearstream Affair contributed to public disillusionment with both the political and legal systems in France, leaving lasting doubts about the fairness of judicial proceedings. The Clearstream Affair remains a symbol of the intersection between politics, finance, and the legal system in France. It exposed the vulnerability of the judicial process when political agendas are at play, leading to a loss of public trust in both political and judicial institutions. The lasting legacy of the affair is its reminder of the potential for judicial processes to be manipulated in the service of political gain, ultimately undermining the integrity of the legal system.

### Conclusion

The study of political criminology and the manipulation of justice uncovers a profound and alarming intersection between power, law, and inequality. When power consolidates control over the judiciary, the legal system loses its primary role as a protector of justice, instead becoming a tool for political repression. This manipulation of justice is not just a strategy for silencing dissent and consolidating political dominance; it also erodes the foundational principles of democracy and the rule of law. Through such manipulation, those in power can reshape legal institutions to shield their interests, suppress opposition, and legitimize actions—such as state violence or corruption that would otherwise be deemed unlawful. Whether through politically motivated trials, the erosion of judicial independence, or the weaponization of laws for social control, the dark side of power emerges in the subversion of justice. However, this study also highlights the resilience of those who resist these distortions. Civil society actors, legal reformers, and international human rights organizations persist in their efforts to challenge and expose such manipulations, advocating for legal systems that are genuinely fair and impartial. While the journey to restore justice is often fraught with resistance and challenges, the actions of these defenders are crucial in safeguarding the integrity of the rule of law. Ultimately, this research underscores the necessity of vigilance, accountability, and reform to prevent the legal system from being weaponized for oppression. Understanding how power can corrupt justice is essential to ensuring that legal institutions serve their true purpose protecting individual rights and upholding the principles of fairness and equality. The struggle for justice continues, and through this ongoing fight, societies can hope to dismantle the structures of power that seek to manipulate the legal system for their own gain.

### Future Directions

To prevent the criminalization of politics and the manipulation of the legal system for political gain, future directions must focus on reinforcing democratic principles, upholding legal integrity, and ensuring robust protections for human rights. The following strategies can help safeguard judicial independence, maintain the credibility of legal institutions, and prevent the law from becoming a tool of political persecution:-

- ❖ **Strengthening Judicial Independence:** Ensuring the judiciary is free from political interference is crucial for the preservation of justice. This requires establishing transparent legal frameworks that prioritize the selection of judges based on merit, free from political pressures. Judges must also be granted job security and protection from arbitrary dismissal to maintain impartiality. Both domestic civil society and international bodies should actively monitor any attempts to influence judicial processes for political purposes.
- ❖ **Protecting Human Rights and Civil Liberties:** Legal reforms that criminalize political opposition often use national security or public order as justifications, but these amendments frequently undermine basic rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, and association. Future legal reforms must prioritize the protection of fundamental civil liberties. Strong legal safeguards should defend freedom of expression, press, and the right to protest, ensuring that political dissent is not unjustly criminalized under the guise of security concerns.
- ❖ **Building Robust Legal Frameworks Against Political Persecution:** Legal provisions must be established to explicitly prevent the law from being used to target political opponents. This includes enacting laws that



criminalize political persecution and the abuse of legal processes for partisan purposes. Legal institutions must take an active role in investigating and prosecuting cases where laws are selectively applied to silence opposition or punish dissent.

- ❖ **International Oversight and Accountability:** International organizations like the United Nations and the European Union play a critical role in holding governments accountable for unjust legal reforms. Mechanisms such as peer reviews, independent monitoring, and public pressure can deter authoritarian governments from manipulating the legal system. Diplomatic and economic sanctions or incentives can also encourage adherence to international legal standards and human rights.
- ❖ **Public Awareness and Civic Engagement:** Public awareness campaigns and civic engagement initiatives can deter the manipulation of the legal system for political ends. Educating citizens on the dangers of criminalizing politics, the importance of judicial independence, and the long-term consequences for democracy is essential. Encouraging active participation in the political process and legal reforms can ensure that the law reflects the interests of the people, not just those in power.
- ❖ **Promoting Legal and Constitutional Reforms with Broad Consensus:** Legal amendments should be carefully considered, transparent, and involve public debate. Reforms that concentrate power in the hands of a single party or leader often erode democratic norms. Constitutional or legal changes should seek broad political and societal consensus, ensuring that the reforms are not aimed at political consolidation but at enhancing democratic processes.
- ❖ **Establishing Independent Anti-Corruption and Oversight Institutions:** To prevent the manipulation of justice for political purposes, independent bodies such as anti-corruption commissions, ombudsman offices, and parliamentary oversight committees are essential. These institutions must have the authority to challenge politically motivated decisions and hold officials accountable for abuses of power, thus maintaining the integrity of the legal system.
- ❖ **Fostering a Culture of Accountability and Ethical Leadership:** Political leaders and public officials must be held to high ethical standards, with clear consequences for those who misuse the legal system for personal or political gain. Promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct within political parties and government institutions can reduce the likelihood of legal reforms being weaponized to suppress opposition.
- ❖ **Enhancing Global Legal Norms and Standards:** Strengthening global legal norms and enhancing international cooperation is critical to preventing the manipulation of legal systems. Expanding international treaties on human rights, justice, and democracy, as well as improving coordination between international courts such as the International Criminal Court, will help curb abuses of power and ensure that such practices are met with global scrutiny and intervention.

Ultimately, preventing the criminalization of politics and the manipulation of justice requires a multi-faceted approach. Domestic reforms, international oversight, and active civil society engagement are essential to ensuring that the legal system remains an instrument for justice and equality, rather than political control. By strengthening judicial independence, protecting fundamental rights, and fostering greater transparency, societies can build legal systems that serve all people, not just those in power.

### Findings

- ❖ **Instrumentalization of the Judiciary:** Political criminology reveals that, in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes, the judiciary is often manipulated as a tool of political control. Rather than serving as an independent guardian of justice, the legal system becomes an instrument used by political elites to suppress opposition. This includes politically motivated prosecutions, where critics of the government are targeted under the pretext of upholding the law, with the legal system serving to silence dissent and eliminate political rivals.
- ❖ **Erosion of the Rule of Law:** Research indicates that when political leaders manipulate the justice system, it undermines the very essence of the rule of law. Political criminology emphasizes that the rule of law should ensure equal and impartial application of laws, free from political interference. However, when those in power distort the legal system, it leads to selective enforcement, where laws are applied differently depending on political loyalty. This selective application erodes the fairness of legal institutions and undermines individual rights, reinforcing the dominance of the ruling elite.
- ❖ **Criminalization of Political Dissent:** A central finding of political criminology is the use of the legal system to criminalize political dissent. Governments often utilize the judiciary to prosecute individuals, activists, or journalists who challenge the political status quo, charging them with crimes like "subversion," "terrorism," or "anti-state activities." Political criminologists highlight how such prosecutions frequently involve unfair

trials, violations of due process, and the use of law enforcement to intimidate and silence opposition, transforming the legal system into a tool of political suppression.

- ❖ **Judicial Corruption and Complicity:** Political criminology highlights the pervasive role of judicial corruption and complicity in the manipulation of justice. In some cases, judges are either part of the political elite or are directly influenced by political powers, allowing the judiciary to fail in its duty to uphold justice. Research demonstrates how this complicity leads to selective prosecutions, bribery, and the use of the judicial system to settle political scores, often leaving the public without recourse to fair legal processes.
- ❖ **Human Rights Violations and Political Legitimacy:** Studies in political criminology reveal how the manipulation of justice often facilitates state-sponsored human rights violations. Arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings are frequently justified through legal processes, with regimes using laws such as emergency or counter-terrorism statutes to legitimize these abuses. Researchers emphasize that the legal system becomes a tool to rationalize human rights violations, often under the guise of maintaining state security or political stability.
- ❖ **Legal Reforms as Tools of Political Control:** Another critical finding in political criminology is that legal reforms in authoritarian regimes are often designed to consolidate power. Political leaders frequently introduce constitutional, judicial, or criminal law changes that reduce judicial independence, increase executive power, and diminish accountability. These reforms, while often marketed as necessary for national security or governance, serve to restrict civil liberties, eliminate checks on executive power, and entrench political dominance.
- ❖ **Militarization of Justice:** Research into the militarization of justice reveals that regimes often shift legal proceedings to military tribunals or special courts to avoid scrutiny from civilian judicial systems. Political criminologists observe that these military courts are often less transparent, more susceptible to political manipulation, and used to silence political opposition. This trend is particularly evident in states where martial law or emergency powers are invoked, allowing political regimes to bypass civilian courts and ensure favorable outcomes for the state.
- ❖ **State-Sponsored Impunity:** State-sponsored impunity is a key finding in political criminology, with leaders and government officials frequently using the legal system to shield themselves and their allies from accountability. Research demonstrates how political elites manipulate the justice system to avoid prosecution for corruption, human rights abuses, and other crimes. This institutionalized impunity allows the powerful to operate beyond the reach of the law, further entrenching their authority.
- ❖ **International Complicity and the Global Dimension:** Political criminologists have examined how international actors, such as foreign governments, corporations, and international organizations, often overlook or support the manipulation of justice in authoritarian regimes. These international stakeholders may provide diplomatic, economic, or military support to repressive governments, indirectly enabling the abuse of legal systems and undermining global efforts to promote justice and human rights. The need for stronger international legal frameworks and human rights mechanisms to address these issues is a critical area of focus.
- ❖ **Resistance and Reform:** Despite the challenges posed by political manipulation of justice, resistance movements and reformers continue to work towards exposing abuses and advocating for legal reforms. Political criminology highlights the vital role of grassroots movements, legal activists, and international human rights organizations in challenging the politicization of justice. While these efforts face significant obstacles, they offer hope for the restoration of the rule of law and the dismantling of political systems that use the judiciary as a tool of oppression.

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