



Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention: international human rights regime vis-à-vis authoritarian survival

Tuğba Bayar

To cite this article: Tuğba Bayar (27 Sep 2023): Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention: international human rights regime vis-à-vis authoritarian survival, Turkish Studies, DOI: [10.1080/14683849.2023.2262721](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2023.2262721)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2023.2262721>



Published online: 27 Sep 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention: international human rights regime vis-à-vis authoritarian survival

Tuğba Bayar 

Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey



ABSTRACT

This article traces the *raison d'être* for Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. It draws upon two bodies of literature: international human rights regimes (IHRR) and authoritarian survival strategies. The Turkish government faced an electoral defeat in local elections 2019, which represented a serious challenge to the ruling party. To compensate for its loss of power and to consolidate its voter base, the government took some steps for its political survival. This article argues that the dynamics of the withdrawal from the Convention lay primarily behind the authoritarian survival strategies of centralization, legitimation, and repression, and secondarily behind the issue area of the Convention as an international human rights regime.

KEYWORDS Istanbul Convention; authoritarianism; Turkish politics; regime theory; political survival

Introduction

In a midnight presidential decree on 19 March 2021, President Recep T. Erdoğan announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). The official statement declared that the Convention 'was hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality – which is incompatible with Turkey's social and family values. Hence the decision to withdraw.'¹ Confusingly, however, only a year earlier in 2020 Turkey had presented its ratification of the Convention as an advancement during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the Human Rights Council (UNHRC).² Like the withdrawal decision itself, the withdrawal procedure attracted attention. Some argued that the withdrawal by a presidential decree was unconstitutional and this signaled Erdoğan's usurpation of legislative powers. Consequently, a case was lodged at the State Council demanding the annulment of the

CONTACT Tuğba Bayar  tugba.bayar@bilkent.edu.tr  Department of International Relations, FEASS, Bilkent University, Ankara 06800, Turkey

© 2023 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

decision. The court, however, refuted the demand, maintaining that the repeal procedure did not entail any unconstitutional consequences.³ Nonetheless, the withdrawal is found regrettable in both national and international circles because it indicates a setback for the protection of women, who are falling victim to high rates of gender-based violence in Turkey.

Writings that analyze Turkey's withdrawal concentrate on the social relations influencing policy making,⁴ see the withdrawal as an act of networked misogyny,⁵ or as an outcome of de-Europeanization policy.⁶ I approach the withdrawal incident from the perspective of international cooperation. The literature on international cooperation explains dynamics and patterns of cooperation and reasons for deviant behavior (non-compliance), and measures/evaluates the effectiveness of international regimes. Obviously, the existing theoretical infrastructure is inadequate to explicate the unilateral withdrawal of a state from a multilateral international treaty. The universe of cases for unilateral withdrawal from international human rights regimes with domestic considerations is rather narrow to enable large-n studies. Thus, this paper focuses on Turkey as a single case study for a deeper understanding of the withdrawal behavior originating from domestic sensitivities.

Turkey provides a rich insight for various features. The first reason is Turkey's democratization trajectory. By most measures Turkey's democracy was improving when it adopted the Istanbul Convention and it was declining during withdrawal. Turkey is a prominent example of a competitive authoritarian regime,⁷ among other countries such as Hungary, Venezuela, Philippines, and Bolivia. Considering the discussions in the literature about the relation between democracy and propensity to join human rights regimes, the Turkish case provides evidence to support theories on formation of human rights regimes and democratization. Secondly, bearing in mind Turkey's fluctuating motivation for the European Union (EU) accession in light of Turkey's adoption of and subsequent withdrawal from the Convention, one can find evidence in support of realist approaches. Realists argue that states cooperate with others only when it is in their interest to do so.⁸ For realists, 'universal principles' (i.e. human rights) are 'not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time.'⁹ Thirdly, this case also facilitates a discussion regarding soft power gained through human rights cooperation. Turkey was the first signatory to the Convention. During the finalization of the treaty's text a Turkish scholar, Prof. Dr. Feride Acar, played a pivotal role, and the convention thus gained the name of İstanbul, Turkey's largest city, in subsequent communication. Fourthly, among the signatories of the İstanbul Convention, such as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Croatia (among others), discussions similar to Turkey's are observable. Comprehension of Turkey's

withdrawal pattern can thus contribute to fortification of such treaties in the future.

This article commences from the two major features of international human rights regimes (IHRRs): they are vertical and they are uneasy with the sovereignty concept. Accordingly, I argue that the dynamics of Turkey's withdrawal are rooted in two points. First, as an IHRR, the Istanbul Convention was easy for the government to instrumentalize. As well as the adoption of the treaty, the withdrawal from it is also subjected to government's political calculations. Both the regime type of Istanbul Convention and the deep-rooted anti-gender policies of the government provide strong incentives for withdrawal. Secondly, the withdrawal is the government's gesture of power centralization, which is a political survival strategy as an authoritarian response to the electoral defeat of 2019.

To demonstrate this point, this study carries out historical counterfactual reasoning. During adoption of and withdrawal from the Convention, the government remains constant. Yet there is an evident change in its policies in all levels, from the EU accession to minority rights. This paper evaluates Turkey's motivation for EU accession, its level of democracy, and support for human rights for the time it entered into and withdrew from the Convention. The diminishing popularity of the Turkish (competitive authoritarian) government and the government's survival moves are closely observed to understand their effect on Turkey's cooperation under an international human rights treaty. 2019 is the year the diminishing popularity became visible. This study focuses on the year 2020 to observe the government's survival policies that would consolidate its voter base by polarizing the society. Among other moves (i.e. Erdoğan unilaterally breaking the EU-Turkey Deal) I picked 3 incidents: withdrawal from Istanbul Convention, reconversion of Hagia Sophia, and appointment of government trustees to elected municipalities. The common denominator uniting these incidents is that they polarized the society, as the government accompanied its moves by dividing citizens into competing camps (e.g. terrorist supporters vs. loyal citizens, defenders of Islam/Ottomanism vs. Imperialists, and traditionalists vs. LGBT defenders.)

IHRRs represent an issue area in which less-democratic governments would comparatively be less inclined to join. In the same vein, I assume that less-democratic governments would be more inclined to retreat from IHRRs, particularly when it serves their political calculations. Departing from the literature on cooperation under IHRRs, I argue that the vertical nature of IHRRs makes withdrawal decision easier than any international regime type. The distinct nature of an IHRR coming together with a political survival moment of a (competitive authoritarian) regime incites withdrawal behavior. For this end, I first elaborate on the features of and withdrawal from the IHRR. I then continue by substantiating the government's

reluctance to cooperate under the Istanbul Convention by discussing the anti-gender policies of competitive authoritarian governments. I argue that the decision to adopt the treaty and to retreat from it were both political decisions, independent from its content. In the next section, I focus on 'power centralization' as one strategy of elite survival.¹⁰ Two indicators of centralization, *polarizing rhetoric* and *repression against the opposition*, are observable in the actions of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government (including the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention) following the 2019 elections.

Particularities of international human rights regimes

I employ the standard definition of international regimes as 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations.'¹¹ Regimes are horizontal formations that adjust state behavior in the interstate sphere, and they control the effects of regime-governed behavior.¹² Regimes facilitate international cooperation by increasing trust among states, bringing transparency, tailoring an expected state behavior, and by offering the monitoring of regime members for enhanced compliance. Within the world of international regimes, IHRRs mark a peculiar zone for two reasons: their verticality and their relationship to the principle of sovereignty.

IHRRs are designed to impose human rights (HR) obligations on states vis-à-vis the subjects under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, they do not govern interstate affairs.¹³ They are vertical, as 'their primary purpose is to hold governments accountable to their own citizens for purely domestic activities.'¹⁴ As IHRRs do not represent any material interests of a state,¹⁵ states are often unwilling to cooperate for human rights. International regimes help states to 'avoid the costs of uncoordinated national action'¹⁶ but this does not apply to IHRRs. Accession to HR treaties thus becomes a political option depending on the 'the domestic political self-interest of national government.'¹⁷ Owing to the nature of IHRRs, states have fewer incentives to opt for joining them. In particular, the realist school does not foresee any reason states would cooperate to promote HR. Liberal approaches hold that democratizing states, or states with stronger domestic institutions, are more prone to commit to IHRRs, as they leave some space for domestic will.¹⁸

IR theories can thus help us comprehend why states cooperate. Yet, there is a significant loophole in explaining withdrawal behavior. Although there is a significant literature explaining (non-)compliance behavior, we cannot classify withdrawal as an act of non-compliance. On the contrary, withdrawal conduct prevents non-compliance. On the other hand, withdrawal is a

behavior that harms the integrity of the cooperation. For this reason, I choose to interpret withdrawal behavior as *uncooperation* with its own dynamics, which are different than the undercurrents of non-compliance or violation. It is one state's (legal) renunciation to cooperate under an international treaty. When the state becomes unable or unwilling to cooperate, rather than not complying with the treaty, it chooses to exit.

Turkey's adoption of the Istanbul Convention, as well as its withdrawal from the Convention, is shaped by domestic politics and mechanisms.¹⁹ Realist theories, such as realist bargaining and hegemonic stability theories, hold that 'governments accept international (HR) obligations because they are compelled to do so by great powers, which externalize their ideology.'²⁰ In this sense, the adoption of the Convention coincides with a time when Turkey was eagerly making reforms to satisfy the conditions discussed in the EU accession negotiations. Moreover, Turkey was eager to combat negative developments like the dramatic increase in the country's femicide rates and the conviction of Turkey in 2009 by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the domestic violence case of Opuz. Hence, Turkey began to adopt bold reforms to conform with the EU's Copenhagen Criteria after the accession negotiations started in October 2005 and the 'privileged partnership' model emerged as an alternative to the full membership.²¹ Turkey's ambitious EU policies enabled it to overcome the limitations of its tutelary democracy by limiting the role of the military in politics.²² In 2007, the Turkish General Staff had posted statements on their website, known as e-coup or e-memorandum, sharing concerns regarding secularism. The damage caused by the memorandum was overcome by the AKP government. At the same time, the government initiated a 'Kurdish opening,' which would make an impact on the minority rights, a sensitive chapter of the EU accession.²³ Moreover, to address priorities of the Accession Partnership, a constitutional reform package was adopted by a referendum.²⁴ The package aimed for the consolidation of a constitutional democracy. Turkey's progress was praised in the European Commission's 2010 Progress Report.²⁵ Turkey was encouraged to host the 121st session of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE in Istanbul, where Turkey subsequently became the first signature party to the Convention, and gained soft power by naming the treaty after Istanbul.

Moravcsik's liberal perspective puts forward that 'the primary proponents of reciprocally binding HR obligations are (...) newly established democracies.'²⁶ Accordingly, the aim of such governments is to enhance the credibility of their domestic policies via IHRR commitments. Correspondingly, comparison of the years when Turkey signed the Convention and withdrew from it shows the change in Turkey's democracy indicators. The observation of the two years ahead of the signature and the two years following the withdrawal (see [Table 1](#)) reveal that Turkey was slightly strengthening its

Table 1. Comparison of democracy indicators ahead of adoption of the Istanbul Convention and following withdrawal.

Democracy Indicator/ Year	2009	2010	2011	2020	2021	2022
Freedom ^a	Partly Free (50/100)	Partly Free (51/100)	Partly Free (54/100)	Not Free (35/100)	Not Free (34/100)	Not Free (32/100)
Rule of Law ^b	7.25 / 10	7.40 / 10	7.50 / 10	3.5 / 10	3.5 / 10	n/a
Freedom on the net ^c	n/a	n/a	55/100	35/100	34/100	32/100
Regime Type ^d	2 (Electoral Democracy)	2 (Electoral Democracy)	2 (Electoral Democracy)	1 (Electoral Autocracy)	1 (Electoral Autocracy)	1 (Electoral Autocracy)

^aFreedom House, *Freedom in the World* Reports.

^bOur World in Data, Rule of Law, at: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/rule-of-law-bti?tab=chart&country=~TUR>.

^cFreedom House, Freedom on the net, at: <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/FOTN2011-2022ScoreData.xlsx>.

^dOur World in Data, Regime Type, at: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/political-regime?tab=chart&time=2009..latest&country=~TUR>.

democracy when it entered the Convention. There is a dramatic difference, however, when comparing the trend when the Convention was signed and when Turkey withdrew from it. Democratic backsliding is clearly visible in the data of the two years following the withdrawal decision. Departing from Moravscik's analysis that democratizing states are more likely to cooperate under IHRRs, the data are of confirmative status. I therefore deduce that a decrease in democracy increases the probability of withdrawal.

The 'sovereignty cost' of IHRRs does not only prevent HR cooperation but also facilitates withdrawal. Low or non-existent interstate type of enforcement is another factor. The lack of (or low degree of) external constraints in IHRRs cause higher intervention of domestic influences that shape the behavior of the signatory party. As a HR treaty to eliminate gender-based violence, the Istanbul Convention also incorporates the aforementioned features of IHRRs. The oscillating democratization level of Turkey made a significant impact on Turkey's mode of cooperation.

Anti-gender policies of competitive authoritarian governments

Despite the lack of theory explaining the relationship between the state and gender, we know that one of the integral elements of authoritarian regimes is anti-gender policies as a result of patriarchal, nationalistic, traditional, and religious narratives they rely upon.²⁷ It is argued that right-wing populist governments (as in Turkey under the AKP) build their illiberal (competitive authoritarian) regimes around anti-modernist and anti-gender ideas and focus instead on the nation, family, and religion.²⁸ In these countries, gender policies are securitized vis-à-vis the perpetuity of the nation. For them, LGBT-rights and feminism are harmful to the nation. These

governments often label them as ‘foreign-steered projects’²⁹ or mock them as ‘the moral authority of the West.’³⁰ In Turkey, the partisan press printed op-eds stating that the ‘feminist-homosexual movement initiated imposition of genderlessness to eliminate the distinction between man and woman, which destroys the foundations of family.’³¹ Advocacy journalists suggested ‘the Convention is the worst operation of Erdoğan government, ever. This project is initiated by Jewish entrepreneurs and it aims to indent the family not only in Muslim countries by globally.’³² The Polish advocacy-media published similar views regarding the synthesis of Christianity and national-exceptionalism. In Hungary, gender studies were abolished from curricula.³³

Familialism is a popular policy pursued by illiberal governments to repress reproductive rights and the individuality of women.³⁴ In Poland, the government declared its priority to strengthen motherhood, which is an ‘honor and privilege.’³⁵ Erdoğan was quoted saying ‘gender equality is against nature. What women need is maintaining equivalent values rather than equality’; ‘childless women are deficient, incomplete’; and ‘violence against women is exaggerated.’ The Turkish Minister of the Economy (M. Şimşek) blamed high unemployment rates on women and proposed to solve it by having women stay home. In 2012, the AKP planned to limit abortion rights from the first ten weeks of pregnancy to the first six weeks after Erdoğan said abortion is murder.³⁶ Although the bill was not proposed after it created great controversy, a *de facto* ban was documented that prevents women from undergoing abortion since 247 of 257 public hospitals do not provide the service for their patients.³⁷ Gender-equality has been removed from government structures. In Turkey, shortly after the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, the Ministry for Women and Family was transformed into the Ministry of Family and Social Policy,³⁸ signaling that policies concerning women would only be elaborated within the family and policies that address a woman as an individual would be abandoned. Similarly, Hungary repealed the Gender Equality Department by placing it under the Ministry of Human Resources.³⁹

Illiberal governments also increase control over civil society on behalf of ‘public interest.’⁴⁰ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are stigmatized or even punished for their activism. Turkey’s Interior Ministry and Istanbul governor’s office banned the traditional Feminist Night March, which had been held on March 8, International Women’s Day. Police detained attendees for defaming Erdoğan with slogans like ‘Run, run, Tayyip, women are coming.’⁴¹ In Hungary, an amendment proposed to ban events that promote ‘sexual deviance’ and ‘marches causing “public indignation”.’⁴² The AKP started to dominate civil society by creating NGOs that are organically tied to them. These governmentally controlled NGOs are referred to as government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs). They are instruments of ‘undemocratic governments to manage their domestic politics while looking democratic.’⁴³ They serve to project government’s

power and interests. They facilitate the circumvention of international and domestic constraints.⁴⁴ GONGOs narrow down the sphere for independent civil society as well as its efforts by limiting/blurring awareness building, policy making, and the legislation processes. In this respect, in countries like Hungary and Poland an increase in the number of conservative pro-government NGOs is visible, like the establishment of Poland's *Kobiety dla Narodu* (Women for the Nation).⁴⁵

As for Turkey, the Woman and Democracy Association (*Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği*, KADEM) was established by AKP members. KADEM's visibility increased with the involvement of Erdoğan's daughter. When reporters asked one KADEM founder if it aims to protect women or family, she indicated that they are inseparable.⁴⁶ This family-centric attitude reflects AKP's conservative gender approach that made its first visible impact in 2011 by renaming the 'Ministry for Women and Family' into the 'Ministry for Family and Social Policies.' KADEM coined the term 'gender justice' as an alternative to the 'gender equality' after Erdoğan said that 'gender equality is against nature.' Via KADEM, the government attempted to attribute conservative meanings to global feminist notions. They define women as extensions of men, as mothers, wives, and daughters, and define feminism as 'a movement that kills family' and that ends up with a 'manless society ideal.'⁴⁷ For them, LGBTQ issues are a redline. KADEM blames feminist organizations for promoting homosexuality.⁴⁸ Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu made a speech condemning the Kurdish-oriented Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) for having a homosexual MP candidate (Barış Sulu). Erdoğan agreed that AKP would never have a homosexual candidate.⁴⁹ The Minister of Family and Social Services partially advocated for the Convention, arguing that it would allow the government combat 'against all forms of violence and at the same time all anomalies like homosexuality appropriately.'⁵⁰ Presidential Communications Director Altun said 'we are against employing concepts like freedom and tolerance for homosexuality propaganda, which aims at our families and children.'⁵¹ Finally, as noted above, the official statement regarding Turkey's withdrawal claims that the Convention was hijacked by homosexuality promoters.⁵² Similarly, a declaration of Polish bishops highlights that the Convention 'relies unduly on the concept of gender and thus contradicts human experience and common sense.'⁵³ As in these examples, the Convention's opponents claim that the Convention promoted homosexuality and gay marriage to erode the unity of the family and traditional values.

Authoritarian survival in Turkey

Studies on elite survival demonstrate that power centralization is a survival strategy for reasons like resilience,⁵⁴ crisis management,⁵⁵ and elimination

of veto players.⁵⁶ I argue that power centralization is a strategy the AKP government implemented intensely in 2020 as a response to its in 2019 local elections. I evaluate Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in the aforementioned political context.

The defensive mechanism of centralization has been visible since 2016, when Turkey's departure from democracy was triggered by the failed *coup d'état* attempt of 15 July 2016. Five days after the coup attempt, Erdoğan announced a nationwide state of emergency for three months. With seven extensions, the state of emergency lasted for two years, until 19 July 2018. The government began to rule by legislative decrees, which 'packaged several legislative and executive transactions into a single executive act and thus rendered ordinary legal remedies meaningless in the face of a permissive Constitutional Court that refused to follow its own influential precedent.'⁵⁷ A constitutional referendum was held in 2017, under the conditions imposed by the state of emergency. The results of the referendum replaced the parliamentary system with an empowered executive presidency. Erdoğan triumphed in the presidential elections of June 2018 and introduced the new governance system, which abolished the prime ministry and merged its power with the president's. One should bear in mind that in principle, presidential government leans on the strict separation of powers. Thus, a presidential government does not override other institutions but is expected to work with them and the limits created by the constitutional order.⁵⁸

Turkey's reforms abolished the president's association with any political party.⁵⁹ They also institutionally expanded the executive's powers to include the president's right of decree, by which Erdoğan gained semi-legislative functions. The decrees have the force of law on certain matters and they do not require parliamentary ratification.⁶⁰ Uniting legislation and the execution of laws, the new system weakened the role of the Grand National Assembly. The opposition is easily surpassed by the dual legality, as parliament is the only zone where the opposition makes its impact on decision-making.

The upshot of the reforms and Erdoğan's actions is that the parliament's legislative responsibilities have been usurped, the bureaucracy is paralyzed, local governance is undermined, and the judiciary is impacted. Hence, the authoritarian turn is sealed. Slater contends that 'state power is the strongest institutional foundation for authoritarian regimes' staying in power.'⁶¹ Centralization causes politicization of the judicial system and economics, allowing intensified authoritarian practices by undermining institutions.

The early steps of centralization were acceptable for the public owing to the insecurities in the post-*coup d'état* attempt atmosphere. The transition to the executive presidency took its toll on Turkey, as demonstrated by international democracy indexes. Turkey was marked with *partially free* status in 2011, when the Istanbul Convention was signed; the status turned into *not free* in 2021, when Turkey withdrew.

While centralizing power, competitive authoritarian governments (who are since the last decade largely right-wing populists) utilize pragmatic polarization politics. They construct a symbolic *real folk*, addressing a specific group with nationalistic, conservative, and/or religious sensitivities. They split the society between the real folk and the ‘traitors.’ The rhetoric is based critically on elites. When the press criticizes the government, the populists react as if the press is harming the interests of the nation.⁶² Such campaigns force voters to make a sharp choice, and help the government reduce democracy to numbers in the elections, by which *tyranny of the majority* emerges.⁶³ Such regimes are anti-pluralistic since any criticism directed at the government is presented as a rebellion against the democratically elected.

Discussions regarding whether to remain in or withdraw from the Convention worked to polarize Turkish society. Those who opted to keep the Convention were associated with the opposition, modern secularism, and susceptibility for human rights. They reflect an urban identity, they are individual oriented, and are more inclined to liberal values. Erdoğan calls them *White Turks* and claims that he represents the *Black Turks*, which in his account have been long repressed but represent the true values of the nation. Those who wished opt out of the Convention abide by the government. They are conservatives with religious sensitivities (particularly regarding LGBTQ), are family oriented; and largely support government’s control (over media, etc.).⁶⁴ As explained in the Domestic Survival Campaign section, Erdoğan’s steps following the 2019 elections encouraged polarization, be it on the basis of religion, traditional values, secularism, or neo-Ottomanism.

Post-2019 political survival campaign

The AKP faced a serious electoral defeat in the 2019 local elections, despite its coalition with the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP). After these 2019 elections, two of Erdoğan’s long-time partners, former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and former Economy Minister Ali Babacan launched splinter parties to take votes away from the AKP.⁶⁵ Furthermore, in 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns caused social disturbances and economic problems, with inflation and unemployment rates reaching significant highs. This is why Erdoğan performed a series of actions in 2020 to challenge these opponents and to consolidate power. These actions were designed to unite right-wing voters under Erdoğan’s leadership by polarizing them against domestic and external opponents.

The analysis of Bayulgen et al. on Erdoğan’s rule in Turkey and AKP strategies pursued to stay in power suggests that the resilience of AKP’s competitive authoritarian rule is based on ‘centralization, legitimization and repression; as well as their dynamic interplay with each other.’⁶⁶ Utilizing

Table 2. AKP's political survival strategy after its post-2019 electoral defeat.

	Legitimation	Centralization	Repression
Government Trustees (<i>Kayyum</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National security • Aggressive nationalistic rhetoric • Polarizing rhetoric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginalization of the opposition elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purge of elected mayors
Hagia Sophia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neo-Ottomanism / conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (with the sword in the hands of the Director of Religious Affairs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive centered decision • Unilateral decision • Presenting the AKP and Erdoğan as the embodiment of Islam, national will and democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over religious values • Conflict over ancestral (Ottoman) values
Istanbul Convention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional values, unity of the family • Foreign forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive centered decision • Unilateral decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over familialism

Source: Author's analysis.

these indicators, I argue that AKP government decided to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention as a political survival strategy.

The AKP faced an electoral defeat in 2019 municipal elections, losing its dominance in metropolitan areas such as Ankara and Istanbul. Subsequently, it devised a political survival campaign composed of moves to strengthen its abilities and power. The moves were chosen to reinforce legitimacy for its ideology and existence, and repressed the opposition through the media and removed its elements from governing and decision-making seats. In 2020, the Erdoğan government appointed trustees to purge several elected mayors from the opposition, reconverted Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque, and withdrew from Istanbul Conventinon (see Table 2).

Government trustees ('*Kayyum*')

In the 2019 elections, the pro-Kurdish HDP was excluded from coalitions and ran its campaign alone. It won 62 mayorships in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. During 2020, Turkish authorities appointed government trustees and removed most of these HDP mayors after accusing them of having ties to terrorists. In sum, 59 mayors were either forced out of office, or locked up, or both. The Interior Ministry published a report stating that those municipalities employed their budgets to finance the terrorist organization PKK instead of services and infrastructure projects for their constituents. The regional director of Human Rights Watch in charge of Turkey, Hugh Williamson, stated that these mayors were removed without compelling evidence of criminal activity. Thus, these cases 'trample the rights of mayors and the 1.8 million voters who elected them.'⁶⁷ Anti-democratic procedures of imposing appointed mayors instead of the elected ones serve to neutralize the opposition and to strengthen the clientelist network controlled by the

central government. Appointment of trustees is a strategy to highlight and legitimize the nationalist ideology of AKP. The strategy has the power to polarize society between those supporting the ‘true nation’ and ‘terrorist-supporters.’

Reconversion of Hagia Sophia

Hagia Sophia served as a mosque until 1934, when it was converted into a museum. As an architectural masterpiece, it has been on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1985. The Islamist/nationalist right wing in Turkey has long called for its conversion back into a mosque. As a part of the policy of polarization, Erdoğan occasionally called for the conversion of Hagia Sophia. However, he did not receive the resistance he expected from the opposition. Otherwise, the rhetoric regarding reconverting Hagia Sophia could have lasted long enough to consolidate AKP supporters and create a cleavage among the conservative/nationalist block and the others. The support of the opposition spoiled this polarization strategy. Hagia Sophia’s museum status was cancelled, and it was converted into the mosque officially on 10 July 2020. Erdoğan led the first congregational Friday prayer. The director of religious affairs A. Erbaş was present to hold the sermon, during which he held a sword in his hand as a symbol to reconquer Istanbul like Sultan Mehmet II did in 1453. (It was reconquered from the secular legacy of the republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.) Commentators interpreted his gesture as an effort to divert attention from the damaged economy as a result of the Covid-19 lockdowns. The reconversion was a survival strategy that underpins and legitimizes AKP’s religious-conservative ideology. Owing to the symbolism mentioned above, opening Hagia Sophia as a mosque is anti-Kemalist and neo-Ottoman in many ways.

Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

Turkey withdrew from CoE’s Istanbul Convention by a midnight presidential decree on 19 March 2021. The government blamed unnamed groups for hijacking the treaty to promote homosexuality, which it considered unacceptable for social and family values in Turkey. The official statement notes that the reformed legal system is sufficient to protect and promote women’s rights.

The withdrawal is a dramatic change when we consider the adoption of the treaty. It was an attempt to avert the eroding support for the government, as expressed in 2019 local elections. The calls of the religious congregations to retreat from the Istanbul Convention in return to their support were reciprocated by Erdoğan. Conservative factions had accused the AKP of

undermining Islam, harming the unity of family, and damaging traditional values through the Convention, which they accused of promoting homosexuality. Notably, the official statement on the withdrawal noted homosexuality as a reason for the exit.⁶⁸

As discussed under the section Anti-Gender Policies of Illiberal Governments, there are other states distressed about the Convention. Nine signatory states did not ratify the Convention, and six of those are EU members.⁶⁹ The Hungarian Parliament, the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria, and the National Council of Slovakia rejected the Convention with similar conservative (LGBTQ) concerns. Poland has been considering withdrawal since 2020. Turkish authorities justify their stance by pointing out these states. Yet, the decision not to ratify and the decision to withdraw are two distinct state behaviors. Withdrawal is an act of *uncooperation* after once deciding to be legally bound by it. Turkey had not deposited any reservations to the Convention, unlike other states. Turkey had showed consent in the recognition, implementation and monitoring of the Convention.

Turkey's withdrawal was encouraged and facilitated by the vertical nature of the Convention, as an IHRR. Like any other element of an IHRR, the Convention does not regulate Turkey's relations with other states. It rather promotes and strives for the protection of citizen's rights vis-à-vis the state. Despite the fact that the Turkish government had already consented to the Convention's interaction with sovereignty, this type of the treaty still allows the government wiggle room before it violated the treaty. In this context, AKP was aware it had broad elbowroom within the Convention. In this sense, the government paid more attention to the political function and fallout of the agreement than its actual content.

The Convention's adoption was a top-down manner, just like the withdrawal. The withdrawal served the politics of polarization long pursued by the AKP. It was functional to consolidate the AKP voter base back again, right after the loss of votes in 2019 elections. It was a practical method for political consolidation, together with other actions of the government like dismissal of mayors in the Eastern and Southeastern Turkey and the reopening of the Hagia Sophia as a mosque. At the same time, with these actions the government showed that an electoral defeat does not mean a loss of power. It still has the ability to shape politics and society. Both the withdrawal decision and the procedure fed Erdoğan's urge to centralize power in an autocratic or anti-democratic manner.

One group of observers argues that deep-rooted anti-feminist sentiment within the government ultimately won over the Convention. I object to this approach, because in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, the government had legislated the Law to Protect Family and Prevent Violence Against Women (Act.No 6284) and the law is still in effect. Moreover, Turkey is still a party to the CEDAW. The long-lasting misogynistic rhetoric

of the authorities overlooks the public opinion about government's stance vis-à-vis the Convention.

Public surveys show that the majority does not approve of the government's decision to withdraw. The media as well as some scholarly articles assess Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention as an act to increase AKP votes by satisfying the expectations of the Fazilet Party's (FP) Islamist *national vision movement*. I challenge this argument, basically because support for the AKP did not increase and the withdrawal was not immediately followed by an election. The withdrawal did not make an impact on voting preferences. The withdrawal does not indicate a merger of the voters of the AKP and the FP for a significant total increase in the votes. The number of withdrawal supporters is quite limited and it contains previously existing AKP voters. The FP openly uttered its opposition to the Convention; and after a meeting with Erdoğan their leaders stated that Turkey would certainly withdraw. Yet, one survey revealed that only 18.8% of FP supporters approve of the withdrawal whereas 81.3% disapproves. Another survey revealed that 54% of the public is not knowledgeable about the content of the Convention. Among the knowledgeable ones, 58% wants to keep the Convention and 36% wants to withdraw and 7% has no opinion.⁷⁰ Another survey conveys that only 18.8% approves of the decision to withdraw whereas 52.3% disapproves. In this regard, the withdrawal decision does not reflect the public opinion.

Not only is the withdrawal decision disputable, so is the legal foundation for both international and municipal law. Turkey ratified the Convention through the Parliament, but withdrew by a presidential decree, which is considered undemocratic. The Turkish Constitution does not contain any provisions regarding withdrawal from international treaties. Article 104 of the Constitution states that ratification and promulgation of international treaties are among the duties and powers of the president, whereas the constitution is silent regarding the withdrawal procedure. The same article indicates that 'the fundamental rights, individual rights and duties (...) shall not be regulated by a presidential decree.'⁷¹ As a treaty to prevent domestic violence, the İstanbul Convention falls clearly under this scope. On the other hand, Article 87 of the Constitution states that 'the duties of the Turkish Parliament are to enact, amend, and repeal laws.'⁷² Thus, as an act of repeal, the decision to withdraw from the Convention shall be evaluated as a duty of the Parliament, not the President. Neither the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, nor the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) offer detailed provisions regarding the withdrawal/denunciation/termination procedures. The formalistic view holds that a withdrawal is made in the same way a treaty is adopted. This view does not have a legal correspondence. Scholars usefully remind us that presidential decrees are administrative procedures. The withdrawal from the

Convention is neither a regulating nor conditional procedure.⁷³ Moreover, the Constitution (Article 104) clearly states that

the fundamental rights, individual rights and duties included in the first and second chapters and the political rights and duties (...) shall not be regulated by a presidential decree. No presidential decree shall be issued on the matters which are stipulated in the Constitution to be regulated exclusively by law.⁷⁴

Hence, the right to withdrawal is inherent to the Parliament. The president's power is limited to putting the withdrawal in process. Moreover, according to Article 13 of the Constitution 'fundamental rights and freedoms may be restricted only by law.' Therefore, the withdrawal decree is an overt infringement of the Constitution, thus should be null and void.⁷⁵

The CoE affirms its parties' commitment to the 'spiritual and moral values which are the common heritage of their peoples and the true source of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy.'⁷⁶ Turkey, a CoE member, shall take on this commitment, especially while abiding by the Istanbul Convention.

Overall, the legal examination depicts that Turkey's withdrawal with a presidential decree instead of a decision of the parliament is a precarious procedure with traces of authoritarianism. The counterfactual examination illustrates that the adoption of the treaty coincides with democratization period, affirming the liberal cooperation theories, and the withdrawal coincides with democratic backsliding era, affirming the realist approach to cooperation (see [Table 1](#)). The government adopted the Treaty as it was optimistic about the EU negotiations that led to numerous other reforms (i.e. Kurdish opening). The withdrawal took place when the EU accession negotiations stalled. Moreover, the withdrawal's timing coincides with the AKP's electoral defeat, after which Erdoğan made moves (appointing trustee mayors and converting Hagia Sophia) to reconsolidate the party's voter base and to demonstrate its power. The vertical nature of the Convention facilitated the government's decision to instrumentalize it for its political ends. Thus, this case provided rich data for comprehending unilateral withdrawal from international human rights treaties.

Conclusion

The increasing frequency of unilateral treaty withdrawals since the 2016 Brexit referendum has aroused curiosity regarding the dynamics of withdrawal. As a state behavior, withdrawal is a direct contradiction of international cooperation dynamics and multilateralism. Thus, unilateral withdrawals shall be closely elaborated for an encompassing explanatory theory. Examination of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention hints that the dynamics of withdrawals can originate from the type of the treaty/

cooperation/ international regime and from domestic political considerations.

The challenge now for scholars is to examine the unilateral withdrawals to complete the literature on international cooperation. Withdrawal from multilateral international treaties is not only a research field for the legal discipline, but a major one for international relations. It is going to be a major contribution to the field when the dynamics of withdrawal behavior are unveiled.

Notes

1. "Statement regarding Türkiye's withdrawal."
2. UN General Assembly, "Report," 7 para. 43.
3. İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin Feshine Dair Danıştay Kararı.
4. Sahin, "Combatting Violence," and Kütük-Kuriş, "The Rise and Fall."
5. Eslen-Ziya, "Establishing Networked Misogyny."
6. Bodur Ün and Arıkan, "Europeanization and De-Europeanization," and Temiz and Güneş, "Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamelerinin Hukuki Niteliği."
7. In the literature on democratic regimes, transitional, diminishing forms of liberal democracies are labelled by various names such as "competitive authoritarian regimes," "illiberal democracies," or "tutelary democracies." See Wigell, "Mapping 'Hybrid Regimes'."
8. Krasner, *Sovereignty*, and Mearsheimer, "The False Promise."
9. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 87.
10. Bayulgen, Arbatli, and Canbolat, "Elite Survival Strategies."
11. Krasner, *Structural Causes*, 186.
12. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 19.
13. Moravcsik, "The Origins," 217.
14. Moravcsik, *Explaining the Emergence*.
15. Donnelly, "International Human Rights," 616.
16. *Ibid.*, 601–2.
17. Moravcsik, "The Origins," 220.
18. Moravcsik, *Explaining the Emergence*; Moravcsik, "The Origins"; Moravcsik, "Explaining International Human Rights Regimes"; Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously"; Slaughter, *A Liberal Theory*; and Slaughter, "Liberal International Relations Theory."
19. *Ibid.*
20. Moravcsik, "The Origins," 221.
21. Aybet, "Turkey and the EU," 531.
22. Esen and Gumuscu, "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism," 584–5, and Grigoriadis, "On the Europeanization," 136–7.
23. Grigoriadis, "On the Europeanization," 135.
24. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasasının Bazı Maddelerinde Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun.
25. European Commission, "Turkey 2010 Progress Report," 25–30.
26. Moravcsik, "The Origins," 220.
27. Bush and Zetterberg, "Gender Equality," 258 and 262; Grzebalska, "Poland"; and Krizsán and Roggeband, "Reconfiguring."

28. Grzebalska and Petó, "The Gendered Modus Operandi," 165.
29. Ibid., 166.
30. Bush and Zetterberg, "Gender Equality," 260.
31. Kaplan, "Feminizm ve Eşcinsellik."
32. Kara, "İstanbul Sözleşmesi."
33. Fábíán, "Three Central Triggers," 296, 303.
34. Grzebalska and Petó, "The Gendered Modus Operandi," 167.
35. Grzebalska, "Poland," 87.
36. Ahmadi, "Turkey PM Erdogan."
37. O'Neil et al., "Legal."
38. "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Aile."
39. Felix, "Hungary," 73.
40. Krizsán and Roggeband, "Reconfiguring," 616.
41. Şeker and Sönmezocak, "İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nden Çekilmek," 2.
42. Felix, "Hungary," 70.
43. Naím, "What Is a GONGO?," 95.
44. Kleinschmit and Edwards, "Examining the Ethics," 531.
45. Felix, "Hungary," 77, and Fábíán, "Three Central Triggers," 297.
46. "Kadem Ne İçin Kuruldu?."
47. Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 810-1.
48. KADEM, "Küresel LGBT Dayatmasına Hayır."
49. Kaos GL Derneği, "AKP Broşüründe."
50. SES: Eşitlik, Adalet, Kadın Platformu, "Yeni Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler."
51. *Dijital Dünya Çalıştayı Açılış*.
52. "Statement regarding Türkiye's withdrawal."
53. Fábíán, "Three Central Triggers," 300.
54. Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathway."
55. Haggard and Kaufman, *The Political Economy*.
56. Bayulgen, Arbatli, and Canbolat, "Elite Survival Strategies."
57. Göztepe, "How to Lose a War," 426.
58. Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy*, 14.
59. 6771 numaralı.
60. Constitution of the Turkish Republic, Article 104.
61. Slater and Fenner, "State Power," 16.
62. Müller, "Freiheit," 23-34.
63. Ibid., 50.
64. KONDA, "Seçmen Kümeleri."
65. Yetkin, "Ayasofya."
66. Bayulgen, Arbatli, and Canbolat, "Elite Survival Strategies," 336.
67. Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Kurdish Mayors' Removal."
68. "Statement regarding Türkiye's withdrawal."
69. EU members: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia; non-members: Armenia, Ukraine, UK.
70. KONDA, "İstanbul Sözleşmesi," September 2020.
71. Constitution of the Turkish Republic, Art.104.
72. 6771 numaralı.
73. Temiz and Güneş, "Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnemelerinin Hukuki Niteliği," 960-1.
74. Constitution of the Turkish Republic, Art.104.
75. Şeker and Sönmezocak, "İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nden Çekilmek," 3-4.

76. Statute of the Council of Europe Preamble.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Disclaimer statement

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or [name of the granting authority]. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Funding

This work was supported by European Commission [Jean Monnet Module Award EUHR 101047432].

Note on contributor

Dr. Tuğba Bayar is an instructor at the International Relations Department of Bilkent University. She holds a BA in Political Science and Public Administration from Bilkent University. She received her MSc degree in Middle East Studies program at the Middle East Technical University, Turkey, and completed her PhD degree at Otto-Friedrich-Universität, Bamberg, Germany. She received research grants from TÜBİTAK and the European Commission. Currently he is the coordinator of a Jean Monnet Module project entitled 'International and European Protection of Human Rights.

ORCID

Tuğba Bayar  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8586-913X>

References

- 6771 numaralı Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası'nda Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Kanun. n.d. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2017/02/20170211-1.htm>.
- Ahmadi, Arash. "Turkey PM Erdogan Sparks Row Over Abortion." *BBC*. Accessed 1 June, 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18297760>.
- Aybet, Gülnur. "Turkey and the EU After the First Year of Negotiations: Reconciling Internal and External Policy Challenges." *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 4 (2006): 529–549.
- Bayulgen, Oksan, Ekim Arbatli, and Sercan Canbolat. "Elite Survival Strategies and Authoritarian Reversal in Turkey." *Polity* 50, no. 3 (2018): 333–365.

- Bodur Ün, Marella, and Harun Arıkan. "Europeanization and De-Europeanization of Turkey's Gender Equality Policy: The Case of the Istanbul Convention." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 60, no. 4 (2022): 945–962.
- Bora, Tanıl. *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasi İdeolojiler*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016.
- Bush, Sarah Sunn, and Pär Zetterberg. "Gender Equality and Authoritarian Regimes: New Directions for Research." *Politics & Gender* 16, no. 1 (2011): 258–284.
- Carr, Edward Hallett. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: Reissued with a New Preface from Michael Cox*. Cham: Springer, 2016.
- Constitution of the Turkish Republic, as amended on April 16, 2017; Act no 6881. n.d. https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf.
- Dijital Dünya Çalıştayı Açılış: Fahrettun Altun'un Konuşması. 2021. <https://youtu.be/VzXkKaxT1aI?t=1908>.
- Donnelly, Jack. "International Human Rights: A Regime Analysis." *International Organization* 40, no. 3 (1986): 599–642.
- Esen, Berk, and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016): 1581–1606.
- Eslen-Ziya, Hande. "Establishing Networked Misogyny as a Counter Movement: The Analysis of the Online Anti-Istanbul Convention Presence." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies* 28, no. 6 (2022): 1737–1753.
- European Commission. "Turkey 2010 Progress Report." Accessed November 9, 2010. https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/AB_Iliskileri/Tur_En_Realitons/Progress/turkey_progress_report_2010.pdf.
- Fábián, Katalin. "Three Central Triggers for the Emergence of Central and Eastern European Anti-Gender Alliances." *New Perspectives* 30, no. 3 (2022): 293–310.
- Felix, Aniko. "Hungary." In *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Rights Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe*, edited by Eszter Kovats, and Mari Poim, 62–82. Budapest: FEPS - Foundation for European Progressice Studies, 2015.
- Göztepe, Ece. "How to Lose a War Through Small Defeats: The Case of Turkey's Democratic Backsliding." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2021): 413–443.
- Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. "On the Europeanization of Minority Rights Protection." In *The Europeanization of Turkish Public Policies: A Scorecard*, edited by Aylin Güney, and Ali Tekin, 130–142. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Grzebalska, Weronika. "Poland." In *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Rights Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe*, edited by Eszter Kovats, and Mari Poim, 83–103. Budapest: FEPS - Foundation for European Progressice Studies, 2015.
- Grzebalska, Weronika, and Andrea Pető. "The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland." *Women's Studies International Forum* 68 (2018): 164–172.
- Hadenius, Axel, and Jan Teorell. "Pathways from Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 1 (2007): 143–157.
- Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Human Rights Watch. "Turkey: Kurdish Mayors' Removal Violates Voters' Rights." Accessed February 7, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/07/turkey-kurdish-mayors-removal-violates-voters-rights>.

- KADEM. "Küresel LGBT Dayatmasına Hayır." Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://kadem.org.tr/kuresel-lgbt-dayatmasina-hayir/>.
- "Kadem Ne İçin Kuruldu? Konuk: Özlem Zengin." *Arafta Sorular - Esra Elöni*, Accessed July 22, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaEVT9WToyg>.
- Kaos, GL Derneği. "AKP Broşüründe "Gay Pride." Davutoğlu'ndan "Lut Kavmi" Nefreti!," Accessed June 2, 2015. <https://kaosgl.org/haber/akp-brosurunde-lsquogay-pridersquo-davutoglursquondan-lsquotlut-kavmirsquo-nefreti>.
- Kaplan, Hilal. "Feminizm ve Eşcinsellik: Aileyi Tahririn Başlangıç Noktası." *Sabah Gazetesi*, May 1, 2020. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/hilalkaplan/2020/05/01/feminizm-ve-escinsellik-aileyi-tahririnbaslangicnoktasi>
- Kara, Vehbi. "İstanbul Sözleşmesi ve Aileyi Yok Etmek İçin Alınan Kararlar." *Yeni Akit*, August 31, 2019. <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/vehbi-kara/istanbul-sozlesmesi-ve-aileyi-yok-etmek-icin-alinan-kararlar-29588.html>
- Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye. *Power and Interdependence*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1977.
- Kleinschmit, Stephen W, and Vickie Edwards. "Examining the Ethics of Government-Organized Nongovernmental Organizations (GONGOs)." *Public Integrity* 19, no. 5 (2017): 529–546.
- KONDA. "İstanbul Sözleşmesi." Accessed September 2020. <https://konda.com.tr/tr/rapor/istanbul-sozlesmesi/>.
- KONDA. "İstanbul Sözleşmesi." September "Seçmen Kümeleri", May 2018.
- Krasner, Stephen D. *Sovereignty*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Krasner, Stephen D. *Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Krizsán, Andrea, and Conny Roggeband. "Reconfiguring State–Movement Relations in the Context of de-Democratization." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 28, no. 3 (2021): 604–628.
- Kütük-Kuriş, Merve. "The Rise and Fall of Support for the Istanbul Convention: Understanding the Case of KADEM." *Women's Studies International Forum* 93 (2022). doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102601.
- Lijphart, Arend. *Thinking About Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Mearsheimer, John J. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 5–49.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. "Explaining the Emergence of Human Rights Regimes: Liberal Democracy and Political Uncertainty in Postwar Europe." Working Paper No. 98. Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1998.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. "Explaining International Human Rights Regimes." *European Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 2 (1995): 157–189.
- Moravcsik Andrew. "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics." *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 513–553.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. "The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe." *International Organization* 54, no. 2 (2000): 217–252.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. "Freiheit, Gleichheit, Ungewissheit. Wie Schafft Man Demokratie." 2021.
- Naím, Moisés. "What Is a GONGO?" *Foreign Policy* 160 (2007): 96.
- O'Neil, M. L., B. Aldanmaz, R. M. Quirant Quiles, and F. Resul Kılınç. "Legal but Not Necessarily Available: Abortion at State Hospitals in Turkey." Istanbul: Kadir Has University Scientific Research Fund (2016): 148–153.

- Sahin, Selver B. "Combatting Violence Against Women in Turkey: Structural Obstacles." *Contemporary Politics* 28, no. 2 (2022): 204–224.
- Şeker, Berfu, and Ezel Buse Sönmezocak. "İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nden Çekilmek: Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliğiyle Savaş." *Freedom House* 2 (June 2021): 7.
- SES: Eşitlik, Adalet, and Kadın Platformu. "Yeni Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanı'nın Kadın ve LGBTİ Haklarına Yaklaşımı." Accessed April 21, 2021. <https://esitlikadaletkadın.org/yeni-aile-ve-sosyal-hizmetler-bakaninin-kadin-ve-lgbti-hak-larina-yaklasimi/>.
- Slater, Dan, and Sofia Fenner. "State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanisms and Authoritarian Durability." *Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2011): 15–29.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "A Liberal Theory of International Law", 94:240–49. Cambridge University Press, Anne-Marie. "Liberal International Relations Theory and International Economic Law." *American University Journal of International Law and Policy United States* 10 (1994): 717.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "A Liberal Theory of International Law." *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 94 (2000): 240–253.
- İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin Feshine Dair Danıştay Kararı. No. Esas no: 2021/1747 (T.C. Danıştay Onuncu Daire 28 June 2021).
- "Statement regarding Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention". Accessed 2 March 2022. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/statement-regarding-turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention/>.
- Statute of the Council of Europe. n.d. https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/rop/statut_ce_2015-en.pdf.
- Stephen, D. "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables." *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 185–205.
- Temiz, Özgür, and Felemez Güneş. "Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamelerinin Hukuki Niteliği." *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 24, no. 2 (2020): 959–979.
- "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı: Tarihçe", n.d. <https://www.aile.gov.tr/bakanlik/hakkinda/tarihce/>.
- Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasasının Bazı Maddelerinde Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkında Kanun. *Resmî Gazete*, 13 May 2010, Sayı: 27580 edition, sec. Kabul Tarihi: 7.5.2010. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2010/05/20100513-1.htm>.
- UN General Assembly. "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Turkey." Human Rights Council, 44th Session, 15 June-3 July 2020, Accessed 24 March 2020. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/14>.
- Wigell, Mikael. "Mapping 'Hybrid Regimes': Regime Types and Concepts in Comparative Politics." *Democratization* 15, no. 2 (2008): 230–250.
- Yetkin, Murat. "Ayasofya İbadete Açılıyor. Neden Şimdi? Sırada ne var?" *Yetkin Report. Siyaset, Ekonomi Haber-Analiz, Yorum*, Accessed July 11, 2020. <https://yetkinreport.com/2020/07/11/ayasofya-ibadete-aciliyor-neden-simdi-sirada-ne-var/>.