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Citizens' Obedience to the Democratic Government

Mohadeseh. Alahyari[1], Manouchehr. Tavassoli Naini[2*], Mohammad Sharif. Shahi[3]

[1] PhD student in Public Law, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Islamic Governance, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
[2] Associate Professor, Department of Law, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor, Department of Public Law, Faculty of Islamic Governance, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: tavassoli@ase.ui.ac.ir

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Democracy has consistently been regarded as one of the most complex and contested social concepts throughout history. The concrete and effective manifestation of democracy within a society is realized through the establishment of a democratic state—one that governs based on the foundational principles and elements of democracy. While the classical and prevailing interpretation of democracy emphasizes the rule of the majority, this does not imply that individuals must submit uncritically to the decisions of a democratic government or a state that represents the majority. Contemporary conceptions of citizenship reflect a dual character: it is simultaneously independent from and dependent upon the state. The state's primary function is to safeguard the rights and welfare of its citizens, while citizens, although subject to the authority of the state, also bear the responsibility of active social and political participation. Nevertheless, the potential for dissatisfaction among citizens remains, which may lead to resistance or non-compliance with governmental decisions, even in democratic contexts. This study aims to explore the nature of citizens' compliance with democratic governance and to examine the conditions under which non-compliance may arise. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, the research is grounded in a library-based approach.

Keywords: *Citizen, democracy, democratic state, obedience, sovereignty.*

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1. Introduction

For centuries, democracy has served as the dominant socio-political paradigm across societies, and correspondingly, the democratic state has emerged as the prevailing political model of governance. A substantial body of research, scholarly articles, monographs, public discourses, and academic conferences has been dedicated to examining democracy and democratic governance. These concepts and models have come to permeate all facets of human life and have significantly influenced the operations of both citizens and governments in modern societies.

Despite its prominence, the concept of democracy and the functional efficiency of democratic governments remain among the most contested issues in contemporary legal, political, and social science discourse. This ongoing challenge has fostered a persistent dichotomy between two central poles of modern governance. The first advocates for democracy, democratic statehood, and popular sovereignty. The second, while offering a trenchant critique of democratic systems, upholds alternative ideologies that often

culminate in the unconditional obedience of citizens to governmental authority.

Nevertheless, democracy—like its ideological counterparts—is not without its limitations. Substantial theoretical and practical critiques have been levied against it. Aristotle was the first to systematically defend democracy in his typology of governments, framing it as the most desirable form of rule grounded in the will and desire of the people (Hashemi, 2003).

Over time, numerous philosophers and political theorists have contributed to refining the concept of democracy while others have voiced cogent criticisms. Despite these debates, democracy has ultimately been established as the dominant model of political organization in modern societies. In order to lead toward a civil society, democracy required a tangible and institutionalized form—one that could only materialize in the structure of government. The democratic state, therefore, is the institutional embodiment of democracy, grounded in the rule of law and respect for individual rights and freedoms, aspiring to realize the ideal of a civil society. However, the path toward this ideal is fraught with complexities.

Democracy must contend with multifaceted socio-political, economic, and legal challenges, along with the actualization of popular sovereignty. These challenges have led to considerable fluctuations and, at times, serious disruptions in the historical development of democratic governance. Diverse interpretations of democracy across societies—each shaped by cultural, structural, and situational conditions—have produced various forms of democracy. Each form carries its own strengths and vulnerabilities, rooted in the specific cultural and social fabric of the respective society. Thus, pluralism emerges, democracy evolves, and the democratic state is reconstituted with new and more effective principles. Yet, because human society is dynamic, the challenges to democracy continue to surface.

Civil societies rooted in democracy are not only home to civilized individuals but also serve as the breeding grounds for scientific and artistic advancement. However, the absence of ethical progress commensurate with the development of democratic norms and civil institutions may give rise to inequality and social injustice (Jahanbegloo, 2004).

Furthermore, the conceptual distinction between freedom and democracy remains a critical issue. The risks associated with the "tyranny of the majority" are an ever-present concern (Krick, 2008).

These are but a few of the structural and conceptual challenges that threaten the integrity of democratic systems. Still, based on the classical conception of democracy, it is the people who are vested with the authority to select decision-makers. These elected representatives, in turn, exercise power on behalf of the people. In many cases, however, such decisions remove actual control from the citizenry (Nelson, 2005).

Accordingly, opposition to or non-compliance with governmental decisions may itself be understood as a legitimate and essential element of democracy. Protest, therefore, assumes a unique character in democratic societies.

This study seeks to investigate the conditions under which citizens may choose not to comply with the directives of a democratic government by offering a reconceptualization of democracy, citizenship, and democratic governance.

The central research question guiding this inquiry is: What are the key components that influence citizens' obedience to the decisions of a democratic government? In response, the study hypothesizes that factors such as equality, non-discrimination in law-making and enforcement, collective civic participation, the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, adherence to the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, the establishment of social welfare, and the elimination of barriers to social movements are critical determinants of citizens' compliance with democratic governance.

2. Democracy and the Democratic State

The etymology of the word "democracy" can be traced to ancient Greece. It is derived from two Greek terms: *demos*, meaning "people," and *kratos*, meaning "rule" or "power." Together, they form the concept of "rule by the people" (Krick, 2008).

According to historical sources, the term "democracy" first emerged in ancient Greece, most likely in Athens, and gradually entered the intellectual discourse of philosophers and political theorists. Over time, it became a dominant framework for social and political organization. In its early manifestation, democracy in Greece facilitated civic participation in public decision-

making, representing a form of participatory democracy. Citizens—limited in scope based on the exclusionary definitions of citizenship at the time—convened in public forums to enact and enforce laws (Dahl, 1999).

In the modern era, democracy has evolved into a normative aspiration for many societies. It is grounded in the state's obligation to ensure security, social welfare, legal equality, and civil liberties. Democratic systems are expected not only to guarantee these fundamental rights but also to provide the necessary means to promote citizens' physical and psychological well-being (Andersen, 2022).

Although democracy has philosophical roots in antiquity, its institutionalization as a modern sociopolitical system began to crystallize in the late 19th century. Following the Second World War, democracy gained global traction and emerged as a central organizing principle of international political life (Lewis, 2009).

While democracy's theoretical and practical origins are situated in Western political thought, its influence has gradually extended to other parts of the world. Over the past century, numerous authoritarian and single-party regimes have transitioned into democratic systems due to social, political, and economic pressures. Despite this progress, authoritarian regimes continue to exist, even as democratic procedures and institutions persist in some form within these states (Bashiriyeh, 2008).

This trend underscores the global significance of democratic ideals. Although not all societies embody the full array of democratic principles, many appear to be oriented toward democratization. Broadly defined, democracy is characterized as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." However, this generalized definition lacks the precision necessary to classify its various forms, articulate its normative foundations, or develop robust theories of democratic transition.

To address this conceptual vagueness, a bifurcated definition of democracy is proposed—one minimalist, the other maximalist. The minimalist perspective centers on freedom in its most general sense, while the maximalist definition emphasizes equality across multiple dimensions. Both definitions rest on democratic institutions and principles. The minimalist view focuses on institutional frameworks, while the maximalist view emphasizes normative ideals (Ghazi Moradi, 2018).

Accordingly, a state grounded in democracy must establish both institutions with democratic attributes and uphold principles recognized as essential to democratic governance. These principles form the core pillars upon which democracy is built (Bittah & Boyle, 2005).

The minimalist dimension of democracy necessitates active civic and political participation, whereas the maximalist dimension refers to the normative and structural foundations of democracy. The maintenance of both civic participation and democratic principles depends on the presence of a robust social infrastructure, often identified as civil society. Civil society, in this context, encompasses autonomous spheres distinct from political authority, encompassing cultural and economic realms. This conception differs from conventional definitions of societal civility or ideal society. Examples of civil society include independent media, educational institutions, and cultural centers, as well as economic actors such as labor organizations, capital entities, and service providers (Arjomand, 2018). Civil society may thus be understood as "a range of institutions, associations, and organizations, each reflecting the desires, affiliations, and motivations of social forces. These institutionalized social forces intervene in political, cultural, economic, and social affairs as pluralistic agents of influence" (Rahmanizadeh Dehkordi, 2003).

According to this framework, "civil society encompasses all institutions that articulate citizens' concerns and deliver services responsive to their needs. This includes non-governmental and non-profit organizations. A sustainable civil society is essential for maintaining democratic vitality" (Wizen, 2020).

Democracy, in turn, provides coherence and legitimacy to civil society. The relationship between democracy and civil society is reciprocal: democracy is formed, articulated, and consolidated within civil society, while civil society's endurance and vitality depend on the extent to which democratic values are upheld within it.

Given that democratic governance evolves within the framework of civil society, its stability is linked to the satisfaction of the populace and its institutions. Conversely, widespread dissatisfaction can precipitate the collapse of democratic regimes and the emergence of alternative forms of governance. History has shown that democratic governments can, over time, degenerate into

authoritarian regimes. In such cases, they often erode the autonomy of institutions and individuals, dismantling the very structures of civil society. These governments sever the link between public and private spheres and restrict individual rights and liberties (Jahanbegloo, 2004).

Although democracy cannot entirely preclude the risk of authoritarian backsliding, it significantly enhances the potential for the majority to replace governments that fail to serve their interests (von Hayek, 2021).

Moreover, democracy's foundational principles can safeguard the independence of institutions and individuals. These principles also delineate the boundaries between public and private spheres and enable both to function effectively. In doing so, they foster the continuous reproduction and deepening of democratic practices within society. However, the democratization process requires not only the institutionalization of democratic principles but also their genuine and consistent implementation by both citizens and governmental authorities. These principles can only contribute meaningfully to democratization when enacted substantively, rather than ceremonially or symbolically (Lewis, 2009).

As previously noted, the actual implementation of democratic principles leads to the emergence of democratic governance. The institutionalization of democracy within a society culminates in a government characterized by democratic legitimacy. Theoretically, such a government should be created and reformed through popular will. Nevertheless, the notion that the advent of democracy automatically yields a democratic government is misleading. The formation and consolidation of democratic governance require a gradual historical process, often shaped by the evolution of different political systems.

The modern state emerged from this transitional phase, replacing antiquated institutions that no longer addressed societal needs. These outdated systems were deemed inefficient, thereby necessitating the creation of a state with new administrative and managerial capacities. Such a state must not only restructure its internal mechanisms but also demonstrate its efficacy through institutional reforms (Moral, 2020).

Historically, most modern states evolved from absolutist regimes, which monopolized political power and excluded diverse social groups from governance. Over time, such centralized regimes became increasingly ineffective (Held, 2007).

Early modern states prioritized territorial sovereignty and social order, often rejecting transformative responsibilities. Their primary concern was to maintain internal peace, rather than address the rights or well-being of citizens (Krick, 1999).

With the establishment of the modern state and the rise of constitutionalism, states became obligated to uphold individual and natural rights in addition to maintaining order. Administrative law underwent significant changes, redefining the notion of the "republic." The modern state came to represent a form of governance distinct from its predecessors, marked by structural innovation and the emerging division between public and private spheres.

Key features of the modern state include:

A) **Territoriality** – The delineation and recognition of fixed national borders.

B) **Monopoly on Coercive Power** – Exclusive control over legitimate force via professionalized military and police institutions.

C) **Impersonal Power Structure** – A depersonalized political order governed by law, with authority derived from legal-rational principles.

D) **Legitimacy** – Derived from citizen participation and allegiance to constitutional norms (Held, 2007).

These structural changes redefined the republic. Earlier conceptions emphasized security through the collective relinquishment of certain individual rights to the state. However, this social contract required a universal surrender of rights, rather than selective concessions. In such models, the notion of citizenship was often marginalized. The emergence of the modern republic occurred when rights were conditionally transferred to the state in exchange for new privileges and protections (Barbier, 2007).

Nevertheless, practical realities often diverge from theoretical ideals. Montesquieu's doctrine of the separation of powers aimed to curtail state authority. Democracy emphasized citizen empowerment. The rule of law sought to impose legal constraints on both rulers and the ruled. Constitutions emerged as frameworks to ensure government accountability.

Law became a tool for shaping dynamic societies and safeguarding fundamental rights. Yet authoritarian governance and centralized power structures persist in

contemporary states. It is not implausible that segments of civil society within democracies may adopt undemocratic tendencies, using democracy merely as a mechanism to acquire power (Arjomand, 2018).

State consolidation of the three branches of government and the manipulation of public opinion through media tools represent further threats to democratic governance. Democratization does not hinge solely on levels of public education or healthcare. A truly democratic state must guarantee welfare while also ensuring active civic engagement in public administration.

Despite adhering to democratic principles, a government may be compelled to assert sovereignty and exercise exclusive authority to enforce laws enacted by elected representatives. In such cases, tensions may arise between governmental decisions and public acceptance. These tensions highlight the critical importance of the citizen's role in a political system defined by the dynamic between ruler and subject.

3. Human Rights

Human rights constitute the most essential entitlements attributed to individuals, regulating the relationship between individuals and the authority of the state. They define the legitimate scope of state power and simultaneously impose obligations on states to take affirmative actions. Historically, for much of the pre-modern era, human experience was shaped by domination and coercion. However, with the advent of the American and French Revolutions in the eighteenth century, the modern concept of human rights emerged, laying the foundation for numerous grassroots movements that sought to curtail the arbitrary power of despotic regimes (Falex, 2002).

In contemporary legal and political frameworks, both states and international organizations have committed themselves to the respect, promotion, and enforcement of human rights. These rights serve not only as the basis for defining legal entitlements but also as mechanisms for redress in cases of violations or systemic deficiencies. In legal terms, human rights can be defined as a collection of individual and collective entitlements recognized by states and embedded in national constitutions and international legal instruments. After the conclusion of the World Wars, the international community codified human rights through global and regional treaties, which were subsequently integrated into domestic legal systems. As a result, human rights have become the only universally recognized and codified normative system at the international level (Ghazi Moradi, 2018).

Fundamental human rights, in particular, refer to inherent entitlements that individuals possess solely by virtue of being human (Hashemi, 2003). These fundamental rights reflect a set of ethical, political, and philosophical values rooted in the principles of equality, liberty, democracy, and the rule of law. The essential nature of these rights derives from their foundational role in safeguarding human identity and dignity. The absence of such rights threatens the collapse of individual autonomy and moral agency (Ghazi Moradi, 2018).

Within legal scholarship, the analysis of fundamental rights is divided into various theoretical frameworks. A primary area of distinction lies in differentiating between formal and substantive criteria for defining fundamental rights.

The formal criterion approaches fundamental rights as a list derived from constitutional texts and international legal instruments. Under this view, fundamental rights are those enshrined in positive law and recognized through constitutions, statutory legislation, or international human rights conventions (Niazi & Razaqi Maleh, 2019). This criterion has been widely adopted in German jurisprudence.

In this context, fundamental rights are treated as part of the body of positive law—law that is legislated and enforced by the state—and serve as guiding principles within specific legal systems. These rights are codified in both national constitutions and international treaties. For instance, Articles 1 to 19 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (Grundgesetz) are devoted entirely to fundamental rights (Hashemi, 2003). The preeminent position of human dignity, enshrined in Article 1 of the German Constitution, exemplifies this framework. In contrast, some countries, such as Italy, reflect fundamental rights less explicitly in their constitutional texts.

As for the substantive criterion, this approach posits that fundamental rights are not exclusively identified through codified laws or judicial decisions. Instead, they derive from broader principles of justice and legal reasoning. In some legal systems, general principles of

law form the foundation for recognizing and safeguarding fundamental human rights. The absence of a single formal or legal standard for identifying such rights does not hinder their recognition or normative authority (Ghazi Moradi, 2018).

4. Citizenship

Citizenship, like many other legal and political concepts, has undergone significant transformations throughout history, resulting in the continual reinterpretation and reproduction of its meaning. In its classical conception, citizenship encompassed two essential dimensions: legal equality in rights and obligations before the law, and active participation in political life. This model of citizenship entailed both the capacity to govern and to be governed. The term itself originates from the Greco-Roman tradition, specifically from the idea of self-governance—where individuals directly managed public affairs. However, in practice, the scope of citizenship during antiquity was highly exclusionary. Women—who constituted half the active population—and slaves—who played a central economic role—were excluded from the rights and privileges of citizenship (Azizi Fard, 2020).

For the citizen in ancient Greece, individual destiny was inextricably tied to that of the political community. As such, there was little conceptual separation between personal rights and the collective good. Citizenship was defined primarily by commitment, perceived as a moral virtue and public service. Public institutions served as platforms for the exercise of civic virtue, and the citizen was understood simultaneously as both a ruler and one who is ruled (Biparva, 2018). This understanding prevailed until the late Middle Ages, when evolving socio-political structures and philosophical developments prompted a reevaluation of citizenship.

Niccolò Machiavelli introduced a novel interpretation through his theory of civil republicanism, emphasizing the centrality of civic virtue and autonomy. He argued that an individual's human potential is fully realized when the person, as a citizen of a political community, exercises freedom and self-determination. In this framework, citizenship entails a balance between private and public interests, with an emphasis on the common good, civil morality, and participatory governance. These ideas would later serve as ideological foundations for revolutionary movements in the Americas (Azizi Fard, 2020).

One of the most consequential articulations of citizenship prior to the modern era appears in the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, promulgated during the French Revolution. This declaration equated citizenship with the rights of individuals to liberty, equality, security, and property. A citizen, under this conception, is free to act as they wish, provided their actions do not harm others or infringe on others' rights (Azizi Fard, 2020).

Here, the legal status of the individual as a rights-bearing citizen assumes primacy, superseding the participatory aspects of civic life. In this period, citizenship became principally defined by the legal bond between the individual and the political community. Within this framework, citizenship entails a level of obedience to the authority of the state; however, this obedience is not absolute.

Modern conceptions of citizenship integrate both individual autonomy and collective participation. This dual nature is grounded in individual liberties and social cohesion, emphasizing the community as a locus of identity. Citizenship is reconceptualized as both a legal status and a form of engagement. Individuals do not possess primacy over the community but rather discover their identity within the context of communal belonging. Full civic membership is achieved through the performance of duties and the assumption of shared responsibilities. This understanding draws upon the philosophical legacies of Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Rousseau (Niazi & Razaqi Maleh, 2019).

Accordingly, this interpretation places civic engagement above mere legal status. In Aristotle's ideal republic, political citizenship requires exemption from material concerns, enabling individuals to devote themselves to public service and the common good. The political dimension of citizenship thus eclipses its legal form. Legal citizenship, while providing protections and rights, ultimately functions as a mechanism of accountability. The limits of this legal framework restrict both rulers and citizens to the boundaries established by law. Citizens' freedom of action within this system is constrained by the legality of their conduct and the law's allowance for dissent (Blami, 2015).

In this context, the citizen becomes subject to the rule of law. The law itself becomes the sovereign force to which both governors and the governed must submit. A citizen may resist governmental authority only to the extent

permitted by law. Hence, legal obedience is not directed toward specific rulers but toward a legal order that claims universal applicability. However, the rule of law must be interrogated critically. Legal systems are shaped by distinct sources and implemented by different agents. Furthermore, laws may differ across social groups, resulting in unequal distribution of material and symbolic benefits. If the source of law is located solely in the authority of rulers, the law risks being transformed into an instrument of domination rather than a reflection of collective will (Blami, 2015).

In such scenarios, the rule of law may become a rhetorical device rather than an operational principle. If the separation of powers is not accompanied by other substantive democratic principles, then democracy becomes hollowed out in practice.

Moreover, the concentration of legislative, executive, and judicial power in the hands of a single authority enables the privileging of specific identity groups and the marginalization of others. This may result in selective law-making and discriminatory implementation, thereby disturbing the balance of political and social power among citizens. Such imbalances infringe not only upon individuals' civil and political rights but also upon their rights to participate in the public sphere.

As a result, the citizen finds themself in a dual position. On the one hand, the normative expectations of citizenship require active participation in the political and social domains. On the other hand, the individual may be subjected to the coercive force of the state, which limits this participation.

This tension is embodied in what may be described as state violence—the unlawful or even legally sanctioned imposition of authority in spite of public dissent against the decisions of legislative and executive bodies (Falex, 2002).

5. Citizenship and Compliance with a Democratic State

As previously discussed, democracy possesses an inherent social function that materializes politically and institutionally through the establishment of a democratic state. This is a form of government in which responsiveness to the will of the majority is structurally achievable. Moreover, democratic systems are characterized by mechanisms that allow for the peaceful transition of power in instances where the government ceases to reflect the collective will of the citizenry (von Mises, 2022).

Nonetheless, the imperative for governance, the establishment of legal order, and the administration of public affairs necessitate that the government exercise authority within society. The pursuit of the common good and the maintenance of public order justify the existence of this authority. Society is constructed and sustained through the interaction of various forces and social institutions. This dynamic must be supported and enforced by a political structure capable of ensuring citizens' compliance with legal norms. In pursuit of this objective, governing authorities are compelled to institute binding obligations through which they assert control over the governed. Accordingly, the application of coercive power by the state becomes both necessary and legitimate. It follows that the exclusive exercise of this power is essential to maintain public order and manage social affairs. In a democratic state, such authority is legitimized by the foundational principles of democracy and the electoral consent of the governed. Therefore, the exercise of exclusive power and coercion within this framework becomes a lawful and institutionalized mechanism for governance (Ozer, 2007).

At the same time, as previously noted, citizenship entails full membership in the political community, adherence to its legal system, and recognition of its political authority. Thus, citizenship occupies an intermediary position between democratic ideals and state authority. When social action and civic engagement—capable of restraining power and ensuring justice—are curtailed by democratic governments through legal or institutional means, democracy is reduced to mere procedural formalities (Torn, 2022).

This reductionism erodes the substantive value of political participation, leading to an expansion of state influence and a consolidation of its control over public discourse. A democratic state, empowered by this consolidation, may shape public opinion and concentrate political authority. Consequently, the convergence of governmental power and institutional mechanisms becomes predictable and potentially self-reinforcing. When political actors within both the government and society share aligned interests, the legislative and policymaking processes may increasingly reflect the

priorities of those in power, thereby marginalizing dissenting voices.

Furthermore, if democracy is accepted as governance by the majority, one of its principal challenges lies in the potential for the "tyranny of the majority." This phenomenon, recognized as a significant structural risk within democratic systems, undermines the rights and interests of minority groups. Minority citizens, aware of their divergent identities and positions, often articulate political claims that challenge majority norms (Mahmoudi, 2014).

However, when the majority, by virtue of its numerical dominance, monopolizes state power, its prevailing ideologies and practices may evolve into mechanisms of oppression. This often results in unlawful dominance and the application of systemic violence against minority communities. Although this violence may be legally sanctioned or institutionally enacted, it contradicts the pluralistic spirit of democracy and the legitimate exercise of democratic authority.

Given that democracy is predicated on the protection of individual rights and freedoms, and on enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable, any erosion of democratic institutions—such as the weakening of rights protections, suppression of dissent, or the disregard for equality and justice—heralds a fundamental crisis in democratic governance (Torn, 2022).

In this context, one of the most critical rights becomes the citizen's right to withhold compliance with the decisions of a democratic government that has deviated from its foundational principles. When a democratic government begins to institutionalize the dominance of the majority or manipulate civil institutions for its own advantage, it ceases to function democratically and instead adopts authoritarian characteristics. As previously outlined, the concept of citizenship entails active participation in the governance of society, with a commitment to the protection of others' rights and a role in preserving shared democratic institutions. This conception of citizenship enables individuals to engage both in public governance and in private life, balancing legal obligations with social responsibility (Falex, 2002). The people—the citizens—constitute the central pillar of democracy. Any process that alienates citizenship from its foundational elements inevitably compromises its realization. In such circumstances, the protection of citizens' rights becomes the primary responsibility of civil society and the collective mobilization of citizens. Political action within democratic societies becomes meaningful only when state authority is responsive and accountable to citizen demands, even if that accountability is primarily expressed through civil society and not formal governmental mechanisms. Democracy, at its core, evolves in response to social conflict, particularly in contexts of injustice, and in pursuit of justice-oriented claims (Torn, 2022).

Social action, which organizes and mobilizes these conflicts, is grounded in the concept of citizenship. Accordingly, the erosion or distortion of citizenship strikes at the heart of democracy. A government that diverges from the essential values and institutions of democracy forfeits its democratic legitimacy and becomes the focus of political resistance and social contestation. Governmental decisions that are misaligned with the collective interests and demands of the citizenry may thus become the impetus for civic dissent and noncompliance.

In this regard, the refusal to comply—whether individually or collectively—with the decisions of a democratic government that fails to represent the people's interests is not only a legitimate form of dissent but also a fundamental democratic right. Such noncompliance, situated within the normative framework of democracy, is both legally and conceptually justified.

6. Conclusion

A society founded on democratic principles is capable of safeguarding the fundamental rights and liberties of all individuals, including minority groups. When these minimum standards of human rights are protected and upheld, citizens within such a society are more likely to experience freedom, dignity, and well-being.

To achieve these objectives, executive functions must be carried out by a government that is institutionally capable of implementing the foundational elements of democracy in an effective and timely manner. This form of governance is generally termed a *democratic government*. A democratic government is inherently responsible for preserving the essential characteristics and structural integrity of democracy. In order to realize the mandates of democratic governance and enforce the laws enacted through democratic procedures, such a government must exercise political authority, or more

precisely, assert legal sovereignty. This exercise of power, however, does not nullify or hinder the capacity of citizens to articulate and present their demands to the state.

It is within this framework that the true and substantive meaning of citizenship in a democratic system is revealed. Citizenship denotes a legal and political relationship between the individual and the state. It is not merely passive subordination to authority; rather, it encompasses active participation in political and social life. Citizens, as participants in the governance of public affairs, hold the legitimate right to demand transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from governmental authorities.

Democracy, therefore, legitimizes the rights of individuals to pursue their interests and ensures that the state remains answerable to the citizenry. Nevertheless, two major internal threats continue to challenge the realization of democratic ideals: the consolidation of state power and the tyranny of the majority. These phenomena arise from within the democratic framework itself and have the potential to subvert it from within, ultimately transforming democratic governance into authoritarian rule.

In such scenarios, the decisions made by democratic governments may lose their legitimacy, particularly when they infringe upon the basic rights and freedoms of individuals. This erosion of democratic norms results in widespread citizen dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the government. Consequently, under these conditions, citizens possess the right to withhold compliance with the decisions of a democratic government when those decisions contravene their fundamental rights.

This right to civil noncompliance is not extrinsic to democracy; rather, it is deeply rooted in the normative foundations of democratic theory.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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