International
SOCIAL SCIENCES STUDIES Journal
Open Access Refereed E-Journal & Indexed & Publishing
e-ISSN: 2587-1587

RESEARCH ARTICLE
International Relations

Systematic Analysis of Global Risks: An AHP-Based Evaluation of Youth Unemployment, Climate Change, and Artificial Intelligence in the Context of Western Liberal Democracies and Türkiye

Küresel Risklerin Sistematik Analizi: Batı Liberal Demokrasileri ve Türkiye Bağlamında Genç İşsizliği, İklim Değişikliği ve Yapay Zekânın AHP Tabanlı Değerlendirmesi

ABSTRACT

This study applies the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to systematically evaluate and prioritize three major global risks—youth unemployment, climate change, and artificial intelligence—within the context of Western liberal democracies and Türkiye. Building on a two-level hierarchical framework, five analytical criteria were adopted: Likelihood of Occurrence, Speed of Emergence, Governability and Policy Preparedness, Inclusiveness of Impact, and Indirect Effects on Democracy. Pairwise comparisons were conducted and aggregated using the geometric mean method, and consistency ratios (CR) were calculated to ensure methodological reliability.

The results reveal that Climate Change ranks as the most critical global risk, primarily due to its broad societal impact and manageability through governance structures. Youth Unemployment follows as a highly probable and politically destabilizing risk, particularly affecting democratic resilience. Artificial Intelligence is placed third overall but emerges as the fastest-growing threat, especially in relation to governance and democratic trust.

The study highlights the multidimensional nature of global risks, with each risk dominating in different evaluative dimensions. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of AHP in integrating qualitative judgments into a systematic, quantitative framework. The findings underline the importance of differentiated yet coordinated policy responses, combining immediate socio-economic measures, long-term sustainability strategies, and anticipatory governance of emerging technologies.

Keywords: Global Risk, AHP, Climate Change, Youth Unemployment, Artificial Intelligence

Eliz Karabulut [1]
Mustafa Sundu [2]

How to Cite This Article
Karabulut, E. & Sundu, M. (2025). "Systematic Analysis of Global Risks: An AHP-Based Evaluation of Youth Unemployment, Climate Change, and Artificial Intelligence in the Context of Western Liberal Democracies and Türkiye" International Social Sciences Studies Journal, (e-ISSN:2587-1587) Vol:11, Issue:10; pp:1759-1769. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17440961

Arrival: 05 September 2025
Published: 25 October 2025

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has inaugurated a new era characterized by complex and multidimensional risks that, if left unaddressed, hold the potential to evolve into global crises within a relatively short timeframe. Unlike the traditional risks of previous centuries which are often manifested in the form of catastrophic wars and direct physical destruction, contemporary risks are largely intangible and insidious, revealing their destabilizing effects only after they have gained significant momentum. These risks emerge from revolutionary technological transformations, the accelerating forces of globalization, and the inherent vulnerabilities of capitalist expansion. They represent not merely challenges to nation-states but systemic threats to the stability of the international order.

Against this backdrop, the present study identifies three critical risks projected to intensify throughout 2025: youth unemployment, climate change, and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). While acknowledging the salience of other threats such as regional conflicts, migration, polarization this research contends that these three phenomena represent the most profound and enduring threats to global governance and societal stability. Their significance lies in their transnational scope, their persistent resistance to previous policy interventions, and their potential to exacerbate structural inequalities across generations and regions.

To evaluate these risks systematically, the study employs five analytical criteria:

- ✓ Likelihood of Occurrence – assessing the probability that each risk will materialize in the short to medium term.
- ✓ Speed of Emergence – examining the pace at which the risk manifests and expands.

[1] High School Student, Robert College, Istanbul, Türkiye, ORCID: 0009-0000-4473-9120
[2] Assoc. Prof. Dr., Istinye University, FEASS, Management Information Systems, Istanbul, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0003-4168-9273

- ✓ Governability and Policy Preparedness – evaluating the capacity of governments and institutions to design and implement effective mitigation strategies.
- ✓ Inclusiveness of Impact – measuring the extent to which populations, regions, or sectors are affected by the risk.
- ✓ Indirect Effects on Democratic Institutions – analyzing the implications of each risk for the resilience and legitimacy of democratic governance.

Each of these dimensions highlights the global magnitude of the identified risks. Climate change, by definition, transcends national borders and directly threatens ecological and economic systems across geographies. The rise of AI introduces transformative technological shifts whose adverse consequences ranging from labor market disruptions to ethical dilemmas are globally diffused due to the ubiquity of digital networks. Youth unemployment, in turn, destabilizes societies by undermining intergenerational equity and fueling disillusionment with political institutions. Crucially, these risks not only unfold with exponential speed but also expose the persistent inadequacies of prior governmental responses, rendering them more acute in the contemporary context.

The criteria used in this study are grounded in international risk management standards and global risk assessment frameworks. First, scope of impact measures the extent to which a risk affects not only the economy but also social, environmental, and political domains. This approach aligns with literature emphasizing the multidimensional severity of risks (World Economic Forum, 2024). Likelihood of occurrence represents a classical dimension of risk assessment and remains one of the fundamental measures in established risk management standards (ISO, 2018). Furthermore, the speed of onset criterion captures the rapidity with which a risk can escalate into a crisis, an aspect highlighted in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) reports as crucial for determining the preparedness window available to policymakers (OECD, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2024). In addition, manageability/policy preparedness focuses on the extent to which risks can be mitigated through governance capacity and policy interventions, a perspective consistent with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and WEF frameworks (UNDP, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2024). Finally, the criterion of indirect effects on democracy recognizes that global risks influence not only economic or environmental systems but also democratic institutions, freedom of expression, and political processes. Research underlining the fragility of democratic values and institutions supports the importance of this dimension (Coppedge et al., 2023). Accordingly, the five selected criteria are firmly anchored both in established risk management standards and in political science literature concerned with the resilience of democratic regimes.

This research builds on a literature that primarily examines systemic risks in the context of Western democracies. In line with this framework, the study focuses empirically on Türkiye, as a Western democracy, to capture societal perceptions of three major risks: youth unemployment, climate change, and artificial intelligence. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is employed as a structured decision-making methodology, enabling the systematic evaluation of these risks across five analytical criteria: likelihood of occurrence, speed of emergence, governability and policy preparedness, inclusiveness of impact, and indirect effects on democracy. By applying AHP, the study quantifies the relative importance of these risks in Türkiye while also providing insights into how local perceptions align with or diverge from broader patterns observed in Western democracies. This dual orientation strengthens the contribution of the research by bridging theoretical debates in the global literature with localized empirical evidence.

SELECTED GLOBAL RISKS

Youth unemployment, climate change, and artificial intelligence (AI) were not chosen arbitrarily; they were selected because they represent distinct yet interrelated dimensions of contemporary global governance challenges, encompassing socio-economic, environmental, and technological aspects. Each of them has demonstrated resilience against past policy interventions, exhibits cross-border implications, and holds the potential to destabilize political, economic, and social systems in profound ways. By examining them in detail, the study seeks to capture the multidimensional nature of global risks and to provide a balanced perspective on how they differ in scope, probability, manageability, and democratic implications.

Youth Unemployment

The world has faced massive unemployment crises which took new dimensions when they started affecting millions of people with the Arab Spring. One of the biggest factors contributing to this catastrophe was youth unemployment rates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region being notably high in late 2010 and early 2011 (nearly 24%) (Schmidt, 2011). Once the Arab Spring was over, people tended to believe youth unemployment was being taken in control; however, the risk of emerging unemployment crises asymmetrically affecting younger people also started to strike Western Liberal Democracies, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In early 2020, youth unemployment in the US rose from 8%-9% to 14% in just a year. Similarly in the EU, youth unemployment rose from 16-17% to 18.9% from 2019 to 2020 (Statista, 2024). However, governments failed to protect the younger people who were starting to have their first experiences in the job markets and were relatively more vulnerable than any other workers both financially and having had experience. Statistically, both in the US and EU, younger workers were more likely to be laid off in industries such as leisure and hospitality and workers with temporary contracts were mostly younger people. Unfortunately, there were not enough government policies to compensate for the asymmetric harm younger workers got from losing their jobs. Moreover, several arguments emerged among groups asserting that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequality for lower-class and younger workers. According to Goldin (2021), "the wealthy were not only able to keep their well-paid jobs but also benefited from soaring stock markets and rising house prices. Low-paid and less experienced workers, in contrast, were more likely to hold jobs in sectors that suspended activities," which economically disadvantaged them. Governments' lack of ability to tackle this situation challenged the governments' political legitimacy and caused mistrust between the younger generation and their governments. This experience is an indicator that a new wave of unemployment that seems to be emerging and will exponentially increase, poses a huge risk for Western Liberal governments.

With the rise of globalization and technological innovations (such as AI), followed by new markets where customer demand cannot be trusted to set market prices, many regions in the US and Europe are starting to face high levels of youth unemployment. For instance, the Southern European countries that are structurally based on production and factories were not able to bring unemployment down drastically after COVID-19. Whilst the youth unemployment rate in the EU was brought down to 14.5% in July 2024, these rates in countries in the southern arena, such as Italy at 22.7%, Greece at 26.6%, and Spain at 28.7% continued to rise (World Bank Group, 2025). These countries are heavily reliant on sectors with seasonal fluctuations like tourism, which cause an increasing amount of younger people to work with shorter-term contacts (Caserta & Ferrante,2021). Whilst youth unemployment already tends to be asymmetrically affected by cyclical changes in the economy, a whole lot of young people enter the labor force in easier jobs (mostly jobs involving production) which adds an extra risk factor for youth employment in the future. The reason this structure in the labor force poses the risk of less stable jobs is that the aggregate demand of industries, which was nearly stable in many industries, is highly fluctuating due to the rise of globalization and many new million-dollar markets opening. The WEF indicated that markets were going in a direction where "keeping capitalism safe itself from its more predatory forms, could not be left to the automatic, invisible hand" (Cavaciuti-Wishart, 2024) with hopes that aggregate demand will stabilize every market. Thus, the rise in capital of many companies with advancements in technology is likely to risk the jobs of many new workers.

A similar unemployment crisis caused by the unstable structure of the labor market also started to rise in the US. Youth unemployment rates in places such as Nevada (with more than 5%), D.C., and Kentucky; where labor markets are mostly based on manufacturing, tourism, and hospitality, similar to the South of Europe, are suffering due to similar reasons with the instability of demand (Statista, 2024). Not only has globalization and the more complex structure of markets caused firms to re-adjust and lay off young workers disproportionately, but advances in AI technologies have also started taking their toll on the job market. According to CBS News' article, in May 2023 nearly 4,000 jobs were lost to AI as some companies stopped hiring new workers in hopes that they wouldn't need more human labor and could substitute it with AI-programmed machines. Companies made layoffs, cuts which were responsible for nearly 5% of all jobs lost, making AI "the seventh-highest contributor to employment losses in May cited by employers" (Napolitano, 2023). The number of jobs lost to AI is expected to keep on exponentially rising. Top venture capitalist Kai-Fu Lee even predicted that "AI will displace 50% of jobs by 2027" and that this prediction is "uncannily accurate" (Ma, 2024), which is also an indicator that a looming cloud of youth unemployment is most likely emerging at a very high speed.

If youth unemployment is not tackled, it will definitely be one of the biggest risks of the following decade. Historically, youth unemployment has led to public unrest and discontent with the government. Cases like the Arab Spring have shown how radical this unrest can get and lead to many political and social problems in many dimensions. The right-wing is already on the rise in 2025, and youth unemployment can lead teens in poverty to join right-radical movements, which would add fire to the unrest chaos. This unrest could further decrease peoples' trust in their governments, making it harder for governments to effectively govern. Moreover, a new mental health crisis could emerge due to teens losing their hopes of making a living working. This wave of hopelessness could lead to a generational brain drain that could reduce productivity in any sector and disrupt countries' economic growth regardless.

In order to compensate for the damage youth unemployment can cause, the EU can re-design education systems in countries where youth unemployment is rising. The redesigning of schools can include more work-based training in

order to teach students basic skills practically for a better chance of getting employed fresh out of education. A similar system was implemented in Italy (2015) that supported work-based training both in school and at the worksites and kept many new graduates from being laid off due to a "lack of field experience" (Caserta & Ferrante, 2021). Also, for the jobs lost to the improvement of technology, the EU can point those areas out and open programs that show people how to effectively use AI and new technologies to either not lose their jobs to technology by being aware of the risky sectors or try establishing and finding themselves online jobs, using the millions of opportunities the internet brings everyone. Moreover, an open government partnership with AI companies can be done locally in order to get future predictions on how many jobs may be lost due to AI and direct people to relatively more stable fields before this happens. It is also beneficial to acknowledge that implementing these new systems may need a lot of economic capital and time, however, there may also be logical ways governments can try to tackle these risks in the long run.

Western democracies face a multifaceted risk landscape regarding youth unemployment, with far-reaching implications for political legitimacy, social cohesion, and the long-term resilience of democratic institutions. Evidence indicates that unemployment is not merely an economic issue but a structural stressor that shapes young people's political identities, trust in institutions, and engagement in democratic processes (Essomba et al., 2023; Muchlis et al., 2024; Friehe & Pfeifer, 2024). Sustained or rising unemployment undermines democratic legitimacy, particularly when combined with economic precarity and unequal access to opportunity (Essomba et al., 2023; Friehe & Pfeifer, 2024).

The mechanism linking youth unemployment to democratic risk operates through a self-reinforcing cycle. Economic insecurity and perceptions of injustice erode trust in political institutions, diminishing the perceived responsiveness of the state. Empirical research shows that local economic conditions strongly influence satisfaction with democracy, suggesting that young people's confidence in democratic governance depends on the performance of local economies (Friehe & Pfeifer, 2024). As trust declines, political engagement weakens and populist or anti-system narratives gain traction (Essomba et al., 2023), further undermining democratic legitimacy, especially when policy measures are viewed as unfair or ineffective (Friehe & Pfeifer, 2024).

Addressing this nexus requires linking economic performance with democratic resilience. Integrating principles of economic democracy into legal and institutional frameworks has been identified as a key strategy for strengthening legitimacy and social trust. Countries such as Finland and Germany have begun adopting these approaches to address unemployment challenges in the digital era (Muchlis et al., 2024). According to Kundnani and Milberg (2024), democratic trust depends on citizens' perceptions of fairness and the state's ability to ensure economic opportunity and protection. Accordingly, proactive, rights-based labor and welfare policies can help prevent youth disaffection and safeguard democratic legitimacy (Muchlis et al., 2024; Kundnani & Milberg, 2024).

Finally, the role of local economies and social capital remains crucial. Micro-level experiences of economic well-being predict satisfaction with democracy more accurately than macro-level indicators (Friehe & Pfeifer, 2024). Therefore, policies supporting youth employment and local development are essential to sustaining democratic participation. On a broader scale, persistent economic insecurity continues to expose democracies to illiberal pressures, confirming that economic exclusion among youth can translate into systemic democratic vulnerability (Levitsky et al., 2024).

Climate Change

With delegates from more than 150 countries signing the Kyoto Protocol on December 11, 1997 (National Geographic Education, 1997), the immense risk that climate change imposes upon the world was officially highlighted. Even though this Protocol monumented a diplomatic accomplishment in order to tackle climate change as a whole, its success was seen to be far from reality. In accord, the report issued two years after the Protocol was signed it was inferred that more than half of the participants would be unable to reach their yearly goals. Moreover, 2 of the biggest polluters in the world (USA and China) argued that they would not be a part of this pact. The fact that nearly the whole world trying to collaborate on tackling climate change failed drastically shows old-school ways may not be the answer to solving it. Thus, climate change is one of the biggest emerging global risks that has specifically let down people's hopes of solving it. Most Western Liberal Democracies have been efficient in regulating private production sectors with taxes and regulations, however, there are risks that they will not be able to tackle if they don't spot these specific problems.

Climate change presents a distinctive and consequential risk to Western democracies because it pressures political systems to act under unprecedented time constraints, while simultaneously testing the legitimacy, institutions, and values that underpin liberal democracy. The scholarly conversation converges on several interlocking themes: climate urgency can strain democratic processes (time, legitimacy, and responsiveness); the effectiveness of

democracies compared to autocracies in mobilizing and implementing climate action may depend on institutional design and political incentives; and there is a normative debate about whether democracy can or should meet the climate challenge without surrendering core liberties or veering toward authoritarianism. The argument proceeds through four core axes: the temporal and denominational challenge, variation in democratic performance under climate pressure, pathways for democratic resilience, and the governance-legitimacy trade-offs surrounding emergency powers and protests.

First, climate urgency creates a time-bounded pressure on democratic decision-making and exposes institutional fragility. The Anthropocene literature underscores that climate crises impose time scales demanding rapid, decisive action often at odds with standard democratic cycles (Ejsing et al., 2024). While some argue that emergency-style responses may be justified, others highlight the risk of normalizing extraordinary powers, entrenching executive prerogatives, and eroding democratic checks and balances if left unbounded (Mittiga, 2025). Moreover, climate-driven instability can undermine democratic trust and institutions if action is late, ineffective, or captured by vested interests (Hafner-Burton et al., 2025; Therie, 2023).

Second, variation in democratic responsiveness suggests that climate policy capture, legitimacy, and backsliding are not uniformly distributed. Pro-carbon interests can dominate in both democracies and autocracies, while institutional design and governance quality often determine emission outcomes (Escher & Walter-Rogg, 2023). Domestic governance instability or short-termism may exacerbate fossil-fuel persistence, while resilient, legitimate institutions are necessary for sustained reform (Xu, 2025; Improta & Mannoni, 2024).

Third, democratic resilience emerges through inclusive deliberation, rights-based governance, and policy entrepreneurship. Evidence shows that democratic processes, when robustly inclusive, can coordinate diffuse interests, mobilize coalitions, and legitimate ambitious decarbonization programs (Escher & Walter-Rogg, 2023). Policy entrepreneurs and civil society movements can help frame just transitions within liberal frameworks (Malmborg, 2024; Cunningham & Hammond, 2025). Complementary scholarship stresses the importance of cosmopolitan education and SDG-oriented governance for aligning democratic legitimacy with global climate action (Susanti et al., 2023; Pavlidis & Gärner, 2024).

Fourth, the political normativity of emergency powers and climate protests reveals tensions between urgency and liberty. While emergency measures may be deemed necessary, scholars warn against their misuse and potential erosion of civil rights (Mittiga, 2025). Similarly, disruptive climate protests are defended as moral imperatives but also critiqued for threatening democratic norms, requiring democracies to navigate contestation without undermining legitimacy (Tretter & Centeno, 2025; Lazar & Wallace, 2025; August & Westphal, 2024; Davidson, 2025).

Finally, the transnational dimension of climate governance highlights the role of UNFCCC orchestration and rights-based jurisprudence. While international frameworks can reinforce domestic climate commitments, they also expose legitimacy gaps that democracies must address through accountability and transparency (Therie, 2023; Pavlidis & Gärner, 2024).

Taken together, the literature portrays Western democracy as both vulnerable and resilient in the face of climate change. Time pressure, policy capture, and democratic backsliding pose risks, yet inclusive deliberation, rights protection, and accountable governance offer pathways for resilience (Brechin & Lee, 2023; Ellis, 2025). Ensuring climate action reinforces democracy—rather than undermining it—requires transparent, rights-respecting, and participatory governance mechanisms that accommodate urgency without eroding liberties.

THE RISE OF AI

New dimensions of opportunities opened for everybody with the introduction of AI to the public. The discussion on the risks of AI has skyrocketed with the introduction of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) such as ChatGPT. To predict how risks caused by new types of AI may evolve, it's essential to understand how widespread its effects already are. The spread of AI started once social media was introduced to the world. Algorithms like the "infinite scroll" expose users to thousands of different data all with the swipe of a thumb. Even if it seemed like a harmless social platform at first, its ability to change the direction of politics and many different global discourses is increasingly clear by 2025.

One of the sides of gaining an immense amount of information gathered with Artificial intelligence was that people started to feel discontent with their lives as they were more informed. People's disappointment with their governments was an important part of this change. The more information with the widespread use of technology brought the awareness of the average person up, leading them to question their government's legitimacy (Aziz, 2017). Moreover, the rise of the non-state actors contributed to this legitimacy crisis because the public saw that

there could be people as influential as politicians while not having been in governing of a country (Friesen, 2020). In a situation where social media has already changed a lot, the emerging complex AI technologies may change how any source of power is perceived by people.

The 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer reported that US citizens' trust in democracy declined from 48% in 2023 to 46% in 2024 (Ries, 2024). Similarly, citizens' trust in democracy in EU countries such as France also dropped in a year. Statistically, developed countries' citizens trusted democracy (with an average of 49%) a lot less than developing countries (with an average of 63%), which signals an inverse relationship between technological development and peoples' trust in their governments (Ries, 2024). Western Liberal Democracies are home to most of the biggest technology companies developing AI technologies; thus, a more widespread use of AI in these countries seems more likely, causing AI to become a bigger risk for them. In the case of the US, the emerging elections where millions of people will head to the polls, Generative AI is used by both national and foreign actors to influence peoples' ideas on who to vote for. The rise of incredibly realistic "deep fakes" generated by AI mixed with real information will most probably bring both parties' legitimacy down in the public eye and could lead to an undermining of peoples' trust for democracy.

One more additional risk AI poses on politics is the possibly arising "AI candidate." A tech company called Neural Voice created an AI candidate for Smarter UK to take place in the 2024 parliament. The AI candidate called AI Steve is claiming to "reinvent democracy by having constituents propose and vote on what AI Steve should do as a local MP, with Endacott physically appearing in parliament to enact what they decide," which is a plausible way to bring AI systems into politics. Critics believe that if elected, Steve AI may lead to more public participation in UK elections due to its responsiveness (24/7 hr availability) and reliability (Smith, 2024). Although AI Steve raises many questions about accountability, it is possible for Western Democracies to have more AI candidates in the future regarding the current state of the lack of trust citizens have for the democratic system.

Even if the rise of AI in politics may seem progressive, there is a huge risk that AI will speed up the spread of misinformation and disinformation. This risk was rated as the biggest risk for the following year by WEF (Cavaciuti-Wishart, 2024) and would affect many discourses negatively. The spread of this non-legitimate information, including realistic deep fakes, could harm peoples' beliefs towards institutions, governments, and many more ideologies since there is not an effective way to make sure people are sincere in the prompts and information, they give to these AI candidates. As a result, unrest towards many institutions could emerge and could result in conflicts that range from violent protests and could lead to an increased number of aggressive behaviours such as hate crimes to civil confrontation and terrorism.

In order to come up with global new models to tackle the risks regarding the increased use of AI, the EU politicians can reflect on new ways that could help them preserve their legitimacy in the rise of AI. AI-included politics may not be a bad thing if this new model shows people's desires for politicians. For instance, if people are content with the responsiveness of AI, then politicians can use this feedback to become more active speakers in the public political discourse and more. In order to deal with the spread of wrong information using AI technologies, the EU can encourage AI companies and social media sites to differentiate between real images and images created using AI. Social media and AI companies are not tackling this risk fast enough, so the EU can encourage their member countries and many others to impose restrictions on these technologies if this problem is not worked on in these companies, which will give them incentive to work faster since they prioritize profit. Even if AI is developing and becoming more popular with or without the intervention of the EU, they could still try to implement AI technologies to the public while also encouraging them to always think twice about the legitimacy and accuracy of the information they take from sources using AI, provoking their incentive to question more ethical values.

Artificial intelligence (AI) now operates at scales and with capabilities such as synthetic media, language generation, and highly personalized messaging that heighten risks to the integrity of Western democratic processes. Multiple analyses identify AI-enabled disinformation, deepfakes, and algorithmic amplification of misleading content as threats to electoral credibility, voter trust, and deliberative legitimacy in liberal democracies (Jayant, 2024; Yan et al., 2025; Luceri, 2025). In the United States and Europe, observers emphasize that the information environment has become more susceptible to manipulation as AI technologies permeate political communication and campaign practices, exposing gaps in regulation and oversight that could undermine fair competition and informed citizen participation (Jayant, 2024; Luceri, 2025). The convergence of AI-enabled manipulation with platform-driven content dynamics thus presents a salient governance challenge for Western democracies seeking to preserve electoral integrity in the digital age (Yan et al., 2025; Luceri, 2025). These conclusions are reinforced by early theoretical and empirical examinations of AI's impact on elections, which call for robust regulatory frameworks and enhanced literacy to mitigate democratic risk (Jayant, 2024; Chowdhury, 2024; Luceri, 2025; Maine & Esiefarienrhe, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to empirically evaluate the relative importance of the three identified global risks; youth unemployment, climate change, and artificial intelligence. Developed by Saaty (1980), AHP is a structured multi-criteria decision-making method that decomposes complex problems into a hierarchy of interrelated levels and derives quantitative priorities through pairwise comparisons. The study sample consisted of 81 participants aged between 18 and 35, representing young adults who evaluated the relative importance of the identified global risks.

The hierarchical structure for this study was designed in two levels:

- ✓ Criteria Level: Five analytical criteria were adopted in line with the literature review: Likelihood of Occurrence, Speed of Emergence, Governability and Policy Preparedness, Inclusiveness of Impact, and Indirect Effects on Democracy.
- ✓ Risk Level: Three systemic risks were evaluated against these criteria: Youth Unemployment, Climate Change, and Artificial Intelligence.

Evaluations were made using the fundamental 1–9 scale proposed by Saaty (1980), where a score of 1 denotes equal importance and higher values indicate stronger relative importance of one element over another. Since the research integrates multiple judgments, the geometric mean method was employed for Aggregation of Individual Judgments (AIJ), a standard practice in AHP literature to maintain reciprocity and reduce bias (Forman & Peniwati, 1998). From the aggregated matrices, priority vectors (weights) were extracted using the principal eigenvalue method. To ensure logical coherence of responses, the Consistency Index (CI) and Consistency Ratio (CR) were calculated for each matrix. Following Saaty's guidelines (2008), a CR value below 0.10 was accepted as indicative of satisfactory consistency. The AHP methodology enabled the integration of qualitative judgments with quantitative analysis, producing a systematic prioritization of risks across multiple evaluative dimensions. This approach strengthens the empirical contribution of the study by linking the theoretical debates outlined in the literature review to measurable and comparable decision-making outcomes.

Criteria Priorities

The analysis of the 5×5 criteria comparison matrix provided insights into the relative importance of the five analytical dimensions used to evaluate global risks. The consistency analysis yielded a consistency ratio (CR) of 0.0148, which is well below the 0.10 threshold. This indicates that the judgments provided at the criteria level were logically coherent and the results are statistically reliable. The findings highlight that Inclusiveness of Impact (0.4611) and Likelihood of Occurrence (0.2803) are the two dominant dimensions in shaping the prioritization of global risks. Speed of Emergence (0.1483) was identified as moderately important, while Governability and Policy Preparedness (0.0734) and Indirect Effects on Democracy (0.0369) received relatively lower weights. These results suggest that participants focused primarily on risks that have broad societal consequences and a higher probability of occurrence, while governance capacity and indirect democratic effects were considered less decisive.

Risk Priorities within Criteria

The second stage of the analysis examined how the three risks were prioritized within each of the five criteria. The results reveal important variations depending on the evaluative dimension.

For Likelihood of Occurrence, the analysis shows that Youth Unemployment is considered the most probable risk (0.73), far ahead of Artificial Intelligence (0.18) and Climate Change (0.09). This suggests that participants perceive unemployment as a more immediate and likely threat compared to environmental or technological risks.

In the case of Inclusiveness of Impact, Climate Change emerges as the dominant risk (0.68), reflecting its far-reaching and multidimensional consequences for societies. Artificial Intelligence (0.22) and Youth Unemployment (0.10) follow at lower levels, indicating that although unemployment is likely, its breadth of impact is not perceived to be as encompassing as climate-related disruptions.

For Speed of Emergence, Artificial Intelligence is prioritized (0.58), consistent with its rapid technological development and sudden societal implications. Youth Unemployment (0.33) ranks second, while Climate Change (0.10) is perceived as the slowest in terms of manifestation.

Under Governability and Policy Preparedness, Climate Change again takes the lead (0.64), highlighting that although complex, it is seen as a domain where governments and policies can still exert influence. Artificial Intelligence (0.23) and Youth Unemployment (0.14) were rated lower in terms of manageability, suggesting concerns about weaker policy tools in those domains.

Finally, for Indirect Effects on Democracy, Youth Unemployment (0.56) stands out as the most significant threat, underscoring the destabilizing potential of economic exclusion on democratic legitimacy. Artificial Intelligence (0.30) follows, reflecting fears of misinformation and manipulation in the political sphere, while Climate Change (0.14) ranks last.

Taken together, these results illustrate that each risk dominates in a different dimension: Youth Unemployment in likelihood and democratic impact, Climate Change in inclusiveness and governability, and Artificial Intelligence in speed of emergence. This multidimensional perspective highlights the complexity of global risk governance and the need for differentiated policy responses.

Global Risk Priorities

The final stage of the analysis integrated the weights of the criteria with the local risk priorities under each criterion to produce the global priorities of risks. This synthesis was achieved by multiplying each risk's local weight by the corresponding criterion weight and then summing across all criteria.

The results demonstrate that Climate Change emerges as the most critical global risk with an overall weight of 0.41. Its dominance is driven primarily by its strong performance under the criteria of Inclusiveness of Impact and Governability and Policy Preparedness, both of which emphasize its far-reaching societal consequences and the scope for policy action.

Youth Unemployment ranks second with a global weight of 0.33, reflecting its high scores under Likelihood of Occurrence and Indirect Effects on Democracy. This highlights its role as a highly probable and politically destabilizing challenge that directly threatens democratic legitimacy.

Artificial Intelligence holds the third position with a global weight of 0.26. Although it was the top risk under Speed of Emergence, and scored moderately under governance and democratic impact, its overall influence is moderated by lower ratings in inclusiveness and likelihood.

Overall, the synthesis reveals that participants perceive long-term environmental risks (Climate Change) as the most pressing when all evaluative dimensions are considered together. However, short-term socio-economic risks (Youth Unemployment) and technological disruptions (Artificial Intelligence) remain substantial threats in specific dimensions, suggesting the need for differentiated but coordinated strategies in global risk governance.

LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

This research has several limitations. First, the study sample consists of 81 participants aged between 18 and 35, which means that the findings primarily reflect the risk perceptions of young adults. Since participants were selected through convenience sampling, the representativeness of the sample is limited, and the results may not be fully generalizable to the broader population. Moreover, as the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) relies on subjective judgments, the outcomes may vary if the same study is conducted across different socio-demographic groups or cultural contexts. Nonetheless, the calculated consistency ratio (CR = 0.0148) supports the internal reliability of the method.

Despite these limitations, the study offers original contributions to the comparative analysis of global risks. The AHP approach, which is typically used in engineering and business contexts, was innovatively adapted to abstract socio-political domains such as political stability, governance capacity, and democratic legitimacy. By integrating qualitative judgments with quantitative measurement, the study provides a multidimensional evaluation of distinct risk categories—youth unemployment, climate change, and artificial intelligence.

The findings show that climate change ranks as the most critical global risk (0.41) due to its inclusive impact, followed by youth unemployment (0.33) with its destabilizing influence on democratic legitimacy, and artificial intelligence (0.26) as the fastest-emerging technological threat. These results empirically demonstrate the need to differentiate risk management policies according to temporal horizons: short-term skill-based employment strategies to mitigate youth unemployment, medium-term sustainability frameworks to address climate change, and long-term ethical and regulatory mechanisms to manage the impact of artificial intelligence on democratic processes. In this respect, the study provides an original model for prioritizing global risks in the context of Western liberal democracies and Türkiye, offering both methodological and policy-level contributions to decision-makers in the multidimensional governance of global risks.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into how different types of global risks are perceived in terms of urgency, impact, and policy relevance. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) analysis reveals that Climate

Change is recognized as the most critical global risk due to its extensive societal consequences and relative manageability through governance mechanisms. Although not perceived as the fastest-emerging or most probable risk, its systemic and all-encompassing nature elevates it to the top priority. Youth Unemployment follows as a highly probable and politically destabilizing risk with direct implications for democratic legitimacy. Its persistent socio-economic pressures highlight the need for immediate and targeted interventions to maintain social trust and democratic stability. This finding resonates with broader debates emphasizing unemployment as both an economic and political challenge in contemporary democracies. Artificial Intelligence (AI), while ranking third overall, is acknowledged as the fastest-emerging risk. Its disruptive potential in digital governance, political communication, and labor markets makes it a growing concern for policymakers. Despite its relatively limited inclusiveness of impact at present, AI's rapid evolution underscores the necessity for anticipatory regulation and digital literacy strategies.

These results confirm that global risks cannot be understood through a single dimension. Each dominates in a distinct evaluative domain—climate change in inclusiveness and governability, youth unemployment in probability and democratic impact, and AI in speed of emergence. This multidimensionality validates the use of AHP as an effective methodological tool that bridges qualitative judgments with quantitative prioritization. From a policy standpoint, addressing these risks requires differentiated yet coordinated strategies. Climate action demands sustained, long-term governance commitments; youth unemployment calls for immediate socio-economic and educational reforms; and AI requires forward-looking regulatory and ethical frameworks. Tackling them in isolation would be insufficient—effective governance depends on recognizing their interconnectedness and ensuring that responses strengthen both sustainability and democratic resilience.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the literature on global risk governance by demonstrating how systematic prioritization can inform evidence-based policymaking. As global risks continue to evolve, future research should extend comparative analyses and examine how technological and geopolitical transformations reshape the hierarchy of threats to democratic and societal stability.

REFERENCES

August, V., & Westphal, M. (2024). Theorizing democratic conflicts beyond agonism. *Theory and Society, 53*(5), 1119-1149. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-024-09565-4

Aziz, M. H. (2017, October 17). Are activist billionaires the new public intellectuals of today's post-hegemonic world? *HuffPost.* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/are-activist-billionaires-the-new-public-intellectuals_b_59bdf007e4b02c642e4a175b

Brechin, S., & Lee, S. (2023). Will democracy survive climate change? *Sociological Forum, 38*(4), 1382-1392. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12957

Caserta, M., Ferrante, L., Jagannathan, R., & Monteleone, S. (2021). Acceptable Jobs and the Epidemic of Youth Unemployment in Southern Italy. In *The Growing Challenge of Youth Unemployment in Europe and America* (pp. 21-50). Bristol University Press. https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/monochap/book/9781529200119/ch002.xml

Cavaciuti-Wishart, E. (2024). *The global risks report 2024: 19th edition (Insight Report)* (Technical Report No. 19). World Economic Forum.

Chowdhury, R. (2024). AI-fuelled election campaigns are here — where are the rules? *Nature, 628*(8007), 237. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-00995-9

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Fish, M. S., Glynn, A., Hicken, A., Lührmann, A., Marquardt, K. L., McMann, K., Paxton, P., Pemstein, D., Seim, B., Sigman, R., Skaaning, S.-E., Staton, J., … Ziblatt, D. (2023). *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Dataset v13*. V-Dem Institute. https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/

Cunningham, M., & Hammond, M. (2025). Arts-based approaches to democracy: Reinvigorating the public sphere. *Politics*. https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957251324529

Davidson, J. (2025). Apocalyptic democracy. *Political Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217251347367

Ejsing, M., Tønder, L., Jensen, I., & Hansen, J. (2024). Do we have time for democracy? Climate action and the problem of time in the Anthropocene. *The Anthropocene Review, 12*(1), 63-78. https://doi.org/10.1177/20530196241279564

Ellis, E. (2025). A strange defense of climate democracy. *Journal of Democracy, 36*(1), 162-168. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2025.a947891

Escher, R., & Walter-Rogg, M. (2023). The effects of democratic and nondemocratic institutions on CO2 emissions. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift, 64*(4), 715-740. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-023-00458-2

Essomba, M., Nadeu, M., & Vallespí, A. (2023). Youth democratic political identity and disaffection: Active citizenship and participation to counteract populism and polarization in Barcelona. *Societies, 13*(12), 245. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13120245

Forman, E., & Peniwati, K. (1998). Aggregating individual judgments and priorities with the analytic hierarchy process. *European Journal of Operational Research, 108*(1), 165–169. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0377-2217(97)00244-0

Friehe, T., & Pfeifer, C. (2024). Predicting satisfaction with democracy in Germany using local economic conditions, social capital, and individual characteristics. *Economics of Governance*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10101-024-00315-x

Friesen, E. (2020). Transnational Politics in Practice. In *The World Economic Forum and Transnational Networking* (pp. 95-122). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Goldin, I. (2021, May 20). COVID-19: How rising inequalities unfolded and why we cannot afford to ignore it. *Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.* https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/covid-19-how-rising-inequalities-unfolded-and-why-we-cannot-afford-ignore-it

Hafner-Burton, E., Mildenberger, M., Ross, M., & Schneider, C. (2025). Confronting our common enemy. *Journal of Democracy, 36*(1), 175-181. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2025.a947893

Improta, M., & Mannoni, E. (2024). Government short-termism and the management of global challenges. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 27*(2), 612-627. https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481241280172

ISO. (2018). *ISO 31000: Risk management – Guidelines*. International Organization for Standardization. https://www.iso.org/standard/65694.html

Jayant, J. (2024). Misuse of artificial intelligence in elections. *Shodh Sari-an International Multidisciplinary Journal, 03*(04), 222-241. https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7758

Kundnani, H., & Milberg, W. (2024). Can democracy be saved by economic policy? The burden of Bidenomics. *Social Research: An International Quarterly, 91*(3), 883–912. https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2024.a938581

Lazar, N., & Wallace, J. (2025). Resisting the authoritarian temptation. *Journal of Democracy, 36*(1), 135-150. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2025.a947889

Levitsky, S., Harper, R., & Zhang, Y. (2024). Steven Levitsky on the global state of democracy and the future of authoritarianism in the United States. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 25*(1), 32–37. https://doi.org/10.1353/gia.2024.a934883

Luceri, L. (2025). Bolstering democracy in the age of AI: Insights from the 2024 U.S. election. *XRDS Crossroads, 31*(3), 34-41. https://doi.org/10.1145/3729523

Ma, J. (2024). Top VC Kai-Fu Lee says his prediction that AI will displace 50% of jobs by 2027 is "uncannily accurate." *Fortune.* https://fortune.com/2024/05/25/ai-job-displacement-forecast-50-percent-2027-kai-fu-lee-chatgpt-openai/

Maine, I., & Esiefarienrhe, B. (2024). The impact of artificial intelligence, ethical implications and technologies on the electoral process. *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences*, 3211-3219. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202451641

Malmborg, F. (2024). Strategies and impacts of policy entrepreneurs: Ideology, democracy, and the quest for a just transition to climate neutrality. *Sustainability, 16*(12), 5272. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16125272

McCaffrey, C. R., et al. (2023, December). *2024 geostrategic outlook: How to thrive amid ongoing geopolitical complexity.* EY Parthenon.

Mittiga, R. (2025). How to confront no ordinary danger. *Journal of Democracy, 36*(1), 151-161. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2025.a947890

Muchlis, Z., Saleh, M., Permatasari, N., Maulana, M., & Harwanto, A. (2024). Economic democracy and unemployment in the digital age. *Peradaban Journal of Law and Society, 3*(2), 139–153. https://doi.org/10.59001/pjls.v3i2.274

Napolitano, E. (2023, June 2). AI eliminated nearly 4,000 jobs in May, report says (A. M. Lee, Ed.). *CBS News.* https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ai-job-losses-artificial-intelligence-challenger-report/

National Geographic Education. (1997, December 11). Kyoto protocol signed. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/kyoto-protocol-signed/

OECD. (2021). *OECD Risk Management: Strategic Crisis Management*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264281385-en

Pavlidis, L., & Gärner, C. (2024). Das Verhältnis zwischen Demokratie und Menschenrechten in der Klimaseniorinnen-Entscheidung des EGMR. *Archiv des Völkerrechts, 62*(3), 348-361. https://doi.org/10.1628/10.1628_avr-2024-0023

Ries, T. E. (Ed.). (2024). *2024 Edelman trust barometer.* Edelman Trust Institute.

Saaty, T. L. (1980). *The Analytic Hierarchy Process*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Saaty, T. L. (2008). Decision making with the analytic hierarchy process. *International Journal of Services Sciences, 1*(1), 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSSci.2008.01759

Schmidt, D. (2011, April 5). Youth unemployment in the Arab world is a major cause for rebellion. *International Labour Organization.* https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/youth-unemployment-arab-world-major-cause-rebellion

Smith, C. (2024, July 2). Britain's first AI politician claims he will bring trust back to politics – so I put him to the test. *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/britains-first-ai-politician-claims-he-will-bring-trust-back-to-politics-so-i-put-him-to-the-test-233403

Statista. (2024). Monthly youth (16–24) unemployment rate in the United States from August 2022 to August 2024. *Statista.* https://www.statista.com/statistics/217448/seasonally-adjusted-monthly-youth-unemployment-rate-in-the-us

Susanti, V., Maharani, N., Azzahra, S., & Sari, Y. (2023). The role of democracy in reinforcing sustainable development and SDGs achievements: Evidence from 3 Muslim countries in Southeast Asia. *KnE Social Sciences.* https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v8i16.14038

Therie, R. (2023). Legitimasi demokratis dari orkestrasi UNFCCC. *Jurnal Hukum Indonesia, 2*(1), 35-41. https://doi.org/10.58344/jhi.v1i2.9

Tretter, M., & Centeno, A. (2025). Fight for your (climate) rights! *De Ethica: A Journal of Philosophical, Theological and Applied Ethics, 9*(1), 72-92. https://doi.org/10.3384/de-ethica.2001-8819.259172

UNDP. (2022). *Human Development Report 2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*. United Nations Development Programme. https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22

World Bank Group. (2025) Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate). *World Bank.* https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS

World Economic Forum. (2024). *Global Risks Report 2024*. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2024

Xu, A. (2025). The effect of democratic backsliding on carbon emissions intensity. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research, 10*(03), 1104-1123. https://doi.org/10.46609/ijsser.2025.v10i03.019

Yan, H., Morrow, G., Yang, K., & Wihbey, J. (2025). The origin of public concerns over AI supercharging misinformation in the 2024 U.S. presidential election. *HKS Misinfo Review*. https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-171