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The meaning and measure of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries

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Abstract. This article presents a quantitative measurement of the political legitimacy of states in the late 1990s and early 2000s for 72 states containing 5.1 billion people, or 83 per cent of the world's population. First, the concept of state legitimacy is defined and justified. The definition includes the subjects, objects and sub-types of legitimacy. A strategy to achieve replicable cross-national measurements of legitimacy is then outlined and implemented, including a discussion of data sources and three alternative aggregation methods. The results are briefly examined and tested, and the uncertainties of quantitative measures discussed. Finally, the role of supplementary qualitative measurement is considered.

Introduction

The concept of political legitimacy is central to virtually all of political science because it pertains to how power may be used in ways that citizens consciously accept. In this sense it is 'the core of political organization'(Alagappa 1995: 3), the basis of the creation of political community that is the focal point of political science. Beetham (1991: 41) called it 'the central issue in social and political theory', while Crick (1993 [1962]: 150) said it was 'the master question of politics'.

Political legitimacy is a major determinant of both the structure and operation of states. There is a general presumption that its absence has profound implications for the way that states behave toward citizens and others. States that lack legitimacy devote more resources to maintaining their rule and less to effective governance, which reduces support and makes them vulnerable to overthrow or collapse. Within the ruling elite, doubts about legitimacy undermine self-esteem, which creates splits that accelerate this process. More generally, the concept has become a central part of modern political discourse, perhaps owing to the emancipatory impact of globalization. In our global era, states that rely only on coercion or individual payoffs are unstable. From apartheid South Africa to crony-ridden Indonesia, illegitimate regimes have been quickly replaced by unaccepting societies. Nothing will turn heads more than a cry of 'legitimacy crisis'.

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Despite the acknowledged importance of legitimacy, political science remains divided about its meaning and its sources. As a result, there is no existing cross-national data set on the legitimacy of states, much less an agreed way of creating one. The motivation for a cross-national measurement of legitimacy is thus twofold: the theoretical issues that are raised by such a measurement, and the theoretical questions for which such a measure is necessary. Is it possible to conceptualize and measure legitimacy so as to produce results that are both statistically and qualitatively robust? Easton (1965: 169), who accepted the validity of the concept of legitimacy, was nonetheless pessimistic about the prospects for its measurement: 'This is a large order, one that would require considerable ingenuity to execute adequately.' King et al. (1994: 110), meanwhile, admonish scholars to avoid 'attempting to find empirical evidence of abstract, immeasurable, and unobservable concepts'.

Yet the complexity of a concept is neither a valid objection nor an insuperable obstacle to its measurement. Scholars have successfully executed measurements of many complex concepts – from Fearon's (2003) cultural diversity measurements to Schmitter and Schneider's (2002) cross-time democracy measurements. To the extent that such measures suffer from validity or reliability problems, these cannot be judged apart from the potential payoffs of the measures themselves. In the case of legitimacy, those payoffs are high. If legitimacy is indeed the central question of political and social theory, then the difficulties encountered in its measurement seem worth the effort. There is perhaps no better testimony than that of Samuel Huntington, a 'realist' if ever there was one, who famously called legitimacy a 'mushy concept that political analysts do well to avoid', and yet in the next sentence said that it was 'essential' to understanding the democratizations of the late twentieth century (Huntington 1991: 46). In this article, I attempt to distill a common meaning of political legitimacy and a replicable way to measure it. I then provide quantitative results from 72 countries. I also suggest how qualitative indicators may enhance the reliability and validity of individual country measurements.

Conceptualization

Definition, object, subjects

The definition of state legitimacy that I will use is as follows: a state is more legitimate the more that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power. This definition includes several substantive matters. It covers the subjects (citizens), object (state, holding and exercising political

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power), orientation (rightful), variable type (more/more) and expressions (treated) of state legitimacy. Indeed, at a deeper level, it implies much more: the ability of citizens to make autonomous judgments, the separability of political power from other types of social power and the validity of subjective views as the basis of legitimacy. In this definition, legitimacy is a concept that admits of degrees. While in the common language of rulers and ruled, legitimacy is used as a dichotomous term, in political science the term is most often used in terms of degrees, as a continuous variable. This is especially the case when one is thinking of subjective legitimacy. Walzer (2002: 35) talks about the establishment of 'locally legitimate' regimes defined as having 'sufficient popular support' in the wake of humanitarian interventions. Gurr (1971: 186) spoke of the 'intensity' of legitimacy.

There are many objects of political legitimacy that have been studied: constitutions, politicians, judges, nations, laws, processes and much else. Our concern here is the state, which is the basic *institutional* and *ideological* structure of a political community. One important political object that is absent from this definition is the government – the particular occupants of executive office at any given time. It has been commonly noted that citizens in democratic countries make a clear separation between their views of the state and their views of politicians, parties and governments (Muller et al. 1982; Lillbacka 1999: 203, Table 11.2). The exception to this is when the government has 'captured' the state – that is, where it has overstepped the bounds of holding office to actually define that office. A better term for this would be 'state-embedded polity', which covers those cases where leaders, parties or governments are indistinguishable from the state.

Finally, it is best to weight the views of all citizens equally in measuring legitimacy. This is not to take such equality as a stylized fact (which it is patently not in any state), but rather to take it as a good estimation across the contingencies of politics. Even if we know that the views of citizens are not all equally important, it may still be a closer approximation to weight them as such than to try to guess the relative strengths of various potentially powerful special players. For not only is there a diversity of potential 'trump players' in most polities, but their influence is constantly evolving. Arriving at some valid weighting of different groups would be difficult if not impossible.

Orientation and sub-types

The word 'rightful' is defined by the *Collins English Dictionary* as meaning 'in accordance with what is right, proper, or just' where 'right' means 'in accordance with accepted standards of moral or legal behaviour, justice, etc.' Both comparative and philosophical treatments of legitimacy share this definitional

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distinction of legitimacy from other forms of political support. (Migdal 1988: 32–33; Barker 1990: 11) Where it is legitimate, the state enjoys the support of citizens not because of fear or favour, but in light of their considered views of what is best from a public perspective.

Legitimacy is an endorsement of the state by citizens at a moral or normative level. It is normative by conceptual definition. It is analytically distinct from that form of political support derived from personal views of goodness. What is sometimes called 'performance legitimacy' is plausible only in terms of how citizens evaluate state performance from a *public* perspective. A citizen who supports the regime 'because it is doing well in creating jobs' is expressing views of legitimacy. A citizen who supports the regime 'because I have a job' is not. 'Performance' is an ambiguous term until we specify the orientation with which it is being evaluated. Once we do so, we can determine whether the citizen response reflects legitimacy or some other form of political support.

For Easton, legitimacy was only possible because of a belief in a 'common interest', a shared interest that transcends individual and partial interests. The belief in a common interest, he wrote, 'pushes in the direction of establishing common standards for evaluating outputs' (Easton 1965: 312–319). Once such standards exist, rightfulness is deduced from how closely a state is acting in fulfillment of them. As a psychological principle, 'common interest' orientations like equity, fairness and justice are well-established aspects of individual evaluations of distributive and procedural arrangements (Hatfield et al. 1978; Mellers & Baron 1993). There are three constitutive sub-types of legitimacy that together define the notion of 'rightfulness': views of legality, views of justification and acts of consent (Beetham 1991). In all three cases, we are concerned with rightfulness 'as believed' by citizens rather than rightfulness 'as claimed' by rulers (Bensman 1979).

Views of legality refers to the idea that the state has acquired and exercises political power in a way that accords with citizen views about laws, rules and customs ('rules', for short). The importance of this sub-type lies in the fact that rules are both general and predictable. Rules create predictability in social life, which is itself a moral good, even if they often entrench injustices in other respects. In pre-modern societies, this legitimacy sub-type is most often seen in customary or conventional rules. In modern societies, they were more often memorialized in written laws in response to demands for greater generality. This is the classical sub-type of legitimacy – indeed the English word 'legitimacy' comes from the Latin word meaning 'to make legal'.

When citizens turn to evaluate the state from a moral perspective, legality alone 'is rejected as inadequate or irrelevant' (Barker 1990: 62). Thus, the second sub-type of legitimacy is based on conformity to shared principles, ideas and values – what I will call '*views of justification*'. This refers to citizen

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responses to the moral reasons given by the state for the way it holds and exercises its power. In this case, rightfulness is drawn from a shared morality that exists in the everyday discourse of citizens. Clearly, this is the core notion of legitimacy since it is here where the autonomous realm of ideas and judgment is seen most vividly. In Beetham's treatise on legitimacy, justification is based upon a 'common framework of belief' between the dominant and the subordinate in any power relationship (Beetham 1991: 69). The notion of moral congruence between state and society is of course a well established part of the comparative politics and sociological literature on legitimacy. Pioneering work in this mould by Eckstein (1966) and Almond and Verba (1980), has been followed by general works by Inglehart (1997) and Nevitte and Kanji (2002) and several good case studies. Political philosophers likewise talk of the 'vertical social contract' of shared beliefs between states and citizens that 'means nothing more or less than that the state is legitimate' (Luban 1985: 203).

The final constitutive sub-type is *acts of consent*. While views of legality and views of justification exhaust the dictionary definition of the term 'rightful', they are insufficient for essentially practical reasons. The pervasiveness of political power and its regularization into everyday life means that at any one time, citizens will consciously be able to consider the legality or justification of only a very small fraction of the entire system. This 'legitimacy gap', as one might call it, gives rise to the need for acts of consent. 'Acts of consent' refers to positive actions that express a citizen's recognition of the state's right to hold political authority and an acceptance, at least in general, to be bound to obey the decisions that result. Consent theories of legitimacy began with Locke but have recently seen a revival as civic republican notions of liberal government came back into favour (Plamenatz 1963; Pitkin 1965; Beran 1987). Consent is thus directed at political authority itself, and the compulsion that it implies, rather than at its specific consequences. It is an all-things-considered check on the system.

Operationalization

Constitutive versus substitutive indicators

Following Bollen and Lennox (1991), a latent concept (one which cannot be measured directly) can be measured in two ways: one is according to lower order constitutive (what they call 'cause') variables that conceptually *define* the higher order concept. For example, a person's income and education level are constitutive of the concept of 'socio-economic status'. Our three sub-types

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are constitutive of the concept of state legitimacy. In such cases, shifts in the constitutive variables cause shifts in the higher order concept. The measurement of the higher order concept is 'right' as long as we have found data that reliably and validly captures the sub-types themselves (assuming the sub-types are correctly conceptualized) and properly aggregated it. Alternatively, we could abandon these categories and instead use higher order *substitutable* (what they call 'effect') variables. Such variables are chosen for their posited close correlation to the invisible concept we are trying to measure – namely state legitimacy. In this approach, the best test of rightness is to look at how closely the various indicators correlate among themselves, which they would presumably do if they all responded to the same stimulus. Classic reliability testing is based on this approach to measurement.

The advantage of substitutive variables as indicators of legitimacy is that they do not require the scholar to take controversial positions on conceptual issues. The size of a state's secret police that aims to crush dissenters, for example, can be taken as indicative of legitimacy no matter how you think legitimacy is constituted. Such variables also have the advantage of providing an empirical solution to the aggregation problem – namely weighing more heavily those indicators that seem to 'clump' together in factor analysis or correlation matrices. The disadvantages of substitutive indicators are both practical and theoretical. The practical concern is the simple lack of enough cross-national measures that could be plausibly described as general correlates of legitimacy. Where such data exists, it may be that we want to study its relationship to legitimacy rather than make it endogenous to our measure of legitimacy itself. In contrast, there is suitable data that can be used to measure the more narrowly defined sub-types. At a theoretical level, the use of substitutive indicators puts the very concept of legitimacy on the table to be proved or disproved according to conventional reliability tests. To many scholars, that is precisely the advantage of using such indicators, and one of the reasons they have dismissed the concept. However, it raises the possibility that the concept might be discarded because of data problems or because of inappropriately set reliability levels. For example, Epstein (1983) argues that any useful concept should not show inter-item correlations higher than 0.2 or 0.3 since otherwise the measures are overly redundant. Yet social scientists are accustomed to expecting inter-item correlations well above 0.5 for a concept to be accepted as valid. The danger then is that substantive issues get submerged by mathematical fiat. In light of evidence of the *prima facie* importance of legitimacy in contemporary politics, my own judgment is to stick to the constitutive formulation. That being said, the validity of this measurement approach still depends on showing that the selection, transformation and aggregation of data is properly done. The proof of that will be both specific arguments in favour of

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each step taken and more general tests to see whether there is a plausible link from the aggregate legitimacy scores to actual outcomes in different countries.

Data and cases

Just as we can measure legitimacy using a constitutive (cause) or substitutive (effect) approach, the same goes for the measurement of its sub-types. Table 1 shows some examples of indicators for each of the sub-types. In selecting indicators, there are three main criteria. First, the indicator should be justifiably related, either as constitutive or substitutive indicator, to one of the three sub-types of legitimacy. Second, the validity and reliability problems of any particular indicator should not exceed some acceptable range defined in terms

Table 1. Examples of indicators of legitimacy

	Views of legality	Views of justification	Acts of consent
Attitudes	* attitude surveys about legality * attitude surveys about corruption * acceptance of electoral or revolutionary mandates * views of police, judges and civil servants	* surveys of political system support, political trust, alienation, etc. * views of effectiveness of political institutions * popularity of embedded polity (authoritarian leaders or parties)	N/A
Actions	* demonstrations or social movements over legal or constitutional issues * importance of laws or constitution in political life * dissonance over election results	* political violence * size of internal secret police * political prisoners * anti-system movements/ secessionism/civil war * mass emigration * crime levels	* election turnout, voter registration * military recruitment, use of mercenary soldiers * tax payments/reliance on foreign loans or resource export taxes * popular mobilization in authoritarian states

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of the size of the overall study (i.e., the total number of cases and indicators). Third, the indicator should be available for a large number of countries.

In examining various possibilities, one is struck by the difficulties of finding indicators with even a modest degree of cross-national reach. Most cross-national data sets are heavily concentrated on Western democracies. It is remarkable how often the seven largest developing countries that together comprise 51 per cent of the world's population – China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Russia and Bangladesh – are missing. In choosing indicators for a data set with truly cross-national ambitions, I have been guided by the need for a representative sample that includes most if not all these seven countries, accepting the tradeoffs that this often implies for finding the ideal-type indicators discussed above. This is not just a matter of scale ambitions, but of the validity of the legitimacy measurement itself. If we confine ourselves to a subset of countries with liberal democratic institutions, we will lack any basis for stating their legitimacy levels in some global sense, and we will deny ourselves the chance to study cross-sectional, and by implication longitudinal, processes of legitimation.

I have selected a total of 72 states for which adequate data exists. These countries contain between them 5.1 billion people, or 83 per cent of world's population in 2001; just 20 (28 per cent) of these countries come from Western Europe and the Anglo-American world. Although data is available for more of them, I have excluded the smaller states (Iceland, Luxembourg, etc.) in order to ensure a more geographically balanced case selection. Another 22 (31 per cent) are from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The other 30 (or 42 per cent of the total) come from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia – four regions that are typically seen as the most culturally distinct from Western Europe and Anglo-America. It is important to have this sort of regional spread across cases in order to establish the global comparability of the measures to be presented. The cases include all of the seven largest developing countries mentioned above that comprise 51 per cent of global population. Table 2 shows how the cases vary by population, income level and regime type. The typical state in our sample is a medium-sized developing country with a minimal democracy – something like Chile or Romania.

After examining various datasets, I have settled on nine quantitative indicators to measure the sub-types – three for views of legality, four for views of justification and two for acts of consent. They are summarized in Appendix A; details on general validity and reliability concerns are available from the author. For views of legality, I have chosen three survey questions concerning human rights, the police and the civil service. Attitudes towards the provision of human rights in a country are a constitutive measure because human rights are a subset of the overall category of the adherence to laws and rules. Indeed,

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the universalization of human rights as a norm in global society may make this more wholly constitutive of views of legality given that the standard list of human rights in international agreements contains most of what we would consider law-abidingness to entail. 'Human rights' implies not a narrow focus on political dissent, but a panoply of legal rights, from fair trials to political participation. Attitudes towards the civil service and the police – the two key agents of state administration – provide an effect-based way to measure views of legality (Tyler 2004). Ideally, attitudes towards the judiciary would be included as well; however, this question was asked in far too few countries in the World Values Survey. Attitudes towards legislatures and parties, meanwhile, would suffer from measuring particular governments rather than the state itself. For views of justification, I use two kinds of indicators. One is three surveys of attitudes towards the political system. All three are 'realist' in that they ask people to evaluate the state 'as it is' rather than as an ideal-type. Since they do not ask citizens whether their state is measuring up to this or that ideal, such questions are a good way to tap into the 'shared beliefs', or congruence notion, of this sub-type.

The other indicator is the incidence of violence in political protests ('normalized civil violence') between 1996 and 2000 from the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators IV* (Jenkins 2000; Jenkins et al. 2000). The indicator is the percentage of all civil actions that involve violence. This figure controls for three important sources of variation in political violence across countries: the absolute level of political protest (which tends to be higher in more democratic countries and in countries with rich cultures of protest), the amount of news coverage on each country (which varies) and a well-known

Table 2. Range of 72 cases by quintile

Indicator	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Population (in millions, 2001)	1.4–4.5	5.2–10.1	10.3–29.6	30.7–69.1	69.3–1,285.2
GDP per capita (US$ PPP, 2001)	520–3,520	3,600–6,110	6,890–10,170	11,290–24,180	24,430–34,320
Regime type (Freedom House, Political Liberties, 1999)	7–4	4–3	3–1	1–1	1–1

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bias in the media to report more often on violent rather than non-violent events. This figure should give a correct ranking of countries in terms of the incidence of violence in political protest. The extent to which citizens feel that they must, or are forced to, use violence, as opposed to regular and legal forms of social protest, should be a good effect indicator of justification failures. Micro-level anti-system political behaviour is a well-known correlate of individual legitimacy views, and this finding can be appropriately extended to the macro-level. (Muller et al. 1982). It need not be that violence is directed at the state for it to reflect on the legitimacy of the state. Rather, such behaviour reflects whether society obeys the state-imposed strictures of non-violence and sanctioned outlets in making such protests. The more the state has successfully incorporated a pluralistic society into the political process, the less likely it is that protests should involve violence.

In the case of consent, we are looking for evidence of behavioural acts that reflect an acceptance of the burdens of citizenship. Since consent is behavioural by definition, we are looking for behavioural data that constitutes consent to the socio-economic and political structures. I use two of the most common indicators for these: the payment of quasi-voluntary taxes for the socio-economic structure, and voter turnout in national legislative elections for the political structure. The ability of states to rely on the payment of 'quasi-voluntary' taxes (i.e., taxes that are easier to evade than directly levied taxes like sales and export taxes) has been seen as an important measure of state legitimacy. (Bates & Lien 1984; Levi 1988; Cheibub 1998; Lieberman 2002). The assumption is that more legitimate governments will be able to rely more on such taxes; that their 'voluntary extractive capacity' will be higher than illegitimate governments. By contrast, states with less legitimacy will be forced to rely on alternative sources of revenue such as foreign borrowing and directly levied sales and export taxes, even if their overall extractive capacity may be higher (Haggard 1990). The indicator used here, calculated from the International Monetary Fund's *Government Finance Yearbook*, or taken from country reports by the IMF, is combined central government revenues from taxes on incomes, profits, capital gains and property as a percentage of total central government revenues excluding social security payments.

Voter turnout in national parliamentary elections is used here to represent consent to the political system. The indicator used is the percentage of the voting age population that actually cast ballots in the most recent national parliamentary election as reported by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). This figure avoids the problem created by variations in voter registration levels across countries, and reflects the conceptualization above in which all citizens are the relevant subjects of legitimacy. Given the well-known problem of the inconsequentiality of a single

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vote, the act of voting (especially in large elections) can rarely be seen as reflecting the rational pursuit of self-interest. Rather, it seems to reflect an array of sentiments, in particular as an expression of popular preferences directed at elites and a desire for social esteem and common feelings (Brennan & Pettit 1990). What seems to join together these meanings is a belief that existing political structures provide the appropriate location for political life. To vote is to reaffirm this tenet. Much as with the political violence indicator, we are concerned here not with the state as end, but with the state as means. Just as refraining from violence in protests directed at the state reflects a legitimacy of state processes, so too voting for anti-system parties reflects a legitimacy of state processes. We are concerned not with the content, but the form, of such behaviour. Of course, scholars of democratization have taken the strength of anti-system parties to be an important indicator of the legitimacy of new democratic states, and rightly so. Yet such behaviour properly belongs under views of justification or views of legality where it would indeed count on the negative side of the ledger. Beyond this content, the mere act of voting, of working from within existing structures, constitutes evidence of consent to the political system.

Aggregation

Details of the transformation of the nine indicators into a common 0 to 10 scale and the aggregation of data within the three sub-types are available from the author. The final step is to decide on an aggregation strategy across the three sub-type scores in order to arrive at a bottom-line legitimacy score for each state. Having decided to measure legitimacy using the conceptual sub-types, any aggregation procedure will again need to be based on some theoretically driven procedure. There is no reason to suppose that the sub-type aggregates will correlate, or, if they do, that it should matter. The question of aggregation here is not the substitutive concerns of correlations and factor analysis, but the constitutive concerns of how the sub-types theoretically fit together (Munck & Verkuilen 2002: 22–27).

An obvious and straightforward answer to this question is to suppose that each sub-type is equally important in the formation of overall legitimacy. Given that the sub-types are a sort of triangulated response to power, it might be reasonable to suppose that each holds an equal role in the legitimation of power. The intuition here is that citizens adopt an all-things-considered view of legitimacy. Composite scores should reflect this continuous nature of the underlying variables; a country may score very low on one or two components and yet still enjoy modest levels of overall legitimacy. The appropriate aggregation strategy in that case is an averaging of the three sub-type composites. I

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will call this the 'unweighted' score. While it may appear theoretically thin, the unweighted strategy takes a substantive theoretical position on legitimacy. By positing an equal role for the three sub-types, it implies that a state could enjoy a modest degree of legitimacy (up to 6.7 points out of 10) even if it entirely failed on one of the three sub-types. By implication, this is a rejection of theories that hold that any one sub-type is *necessary* for a state to be legitimate – in particular classical legality and consent theories. The unweighted aggregation also implies that no state could enjoy more than a minimal degree of legitimacy (at most 3.3 out of 10) by relying solely on one of the sub-types. Thus, this is a rejection of theories that hold that any one sub-type is *sufficient*. In particular, it is a rejection of rational-legal theories of the sort pioneered by Weber wherein a state premises its legitimacy almost solely on its rule-abidingness.

While the unweighted scores may pack a lot of substantive punch, the simple averaging across the three sub-types is not based on any deeper theoretical reasoning than what is provided above. In order to have a legitimacy measurement that is fully theorized, from top to bottom, we should consider whether a modified weighting system is more defensible. To continue along the lines of argument against legality and consent, it may be that we should further bolster the weight of views of justification. This sub-type, after all, has been the most underestimated component of legitimacy in both the real world of politics and the virtual world of scholarship. As both Beetham (1991) and Habermas (1975) have argued, the moral justification of state power (as opposed to its legality or consent) is particularly important because that power underwrites the laws and rules that govern so much of the rest of social and economic life. It is, so to speak, the *uber*-power and without moral justification, its negative consequences are just too hard to bear. I thus believe that justification should be weighted more heavily for a fully theorized measure of legitimacy.

To do this, we can use convergent data. Using the 2002 measure for political stability compiled by the World Bank Institute, we find that justification correlates stronger than either of the other two sub-types (at roughly 0.62 versus 0.31 for consent and 0.20 for legality), further supporting the claim that it has been the most overlooked subtype of legitimacy. Nonetheless, since this is a constitutive measure, we are bound to retain the other two sub-types despite their lower correlations. The unweighted scores have an overall correlation to political stability of 0.51 (versus the 0.62 for the justification sub-type alone). Thus we seek a justification-rich weighting scheme that brings us closer to the 0.62 mark without demanding implausibly small weights for legality and consent. A simple intuitive solution is to give justification a 50 per cent weighting and the others 25 per cent each. Under this scheme, the overall correlation to political stability is 0.57. I will call this the 'weighted' score.

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Finally, for purposes of contrast, it is useful to provide a correlations-based composite that draws upon the measures used here. This will show the impact and thus importance of a proper conceptualization of legitimacy for the purposes of measurement. Let us assume that all the indicators used here are potential candidates for inclusion in a substitutive-based legitimacy score. I have reduced the nine indicators into five by using the closely correlated views of legality and system satisfaction composites. The correlation matrix for these five is as follows:

	A	B	C	D
A. Views of Legality				
B. System Satisfaction	0.72			
C. Political Violence	–0.04	–0.03		
D. Election Turnout	0.08	–0.01	0.07	
E. Self-Paid Taxes	0.30	0.14	0.14	0.19

Despite the low inter-item correlations, the average inter-item correlation (alpha) for all nine indicators taken together (3 for each of A and B plus C, D and E) is 0.76, which on most views of the measurement of social concepts would be an acceptable level. This, however, would give us a measure not sufficiently distinct from unweighted scores and potentially unsatisfactory to those who believe higher correlations are necessary. We therefore exclude the political violence and election turnout scores as insufficient. The self-paid taxes indicator is moderately correlated to the others, but again might be seen as insufficient. I will therefore use only the closely correlated attitude questions that account for the first six of the nine indicators in the chart. Since these happen to encompass all of the attitude indicators, I will refer to this as the 'attitudinal series', which is a straight average of a country's transformed score on these six indicators (with the same provisos concerning missing values as above). The average inter-item correlation (alpha score) for this indicator is 0.89.

Results and further analysis

Results and discussion

Table 3 presents the three legitimacy scores for all countries ranked highest to lowest, and Table 4 presents the same scores by region. The impact of the three

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Table 3. Legitimacy scores, all countries, by weighted

Rank	Country	Unweighted	Weighted	Attitudinal
1	Denmark	7.72	7.62	8.20
2	Norway	7.29	7.61	8.10
3	Netherlands	6.87	7.13	7.28
4	Canada	7.00	7.03	7.57
5	Austria	6.88	7.00	7.30
6	Finland	6.86	6.98	7.41
7	Sweden	6.81	6.93	7.01
8	United States	6.72	6.82	7.12
9	Azerbaijan	6.08	6.78	5.99
10	Germany	6.53	6.68	7.23
11	Belgium	6.76	6.64	5.67
12	Taiwan	6.58	6.62	6.31
13	China	6.21	6.58	8.50
14	Ireland	6.73	6.48	7.78
15	Portugal	6.27	6.39	6.52
16	Australia	6.73	6.38	5.43
17	Spain	6.26	6.28	6.33
18	Britain	6.22	6.28	6.39
19	South Africa	6.22	6.24	6.17
20	Uruguay	6.00	5.94	4.22
21	Italy	6.24	5.90	4.59
22	Chile	5.58	5.81	5.55
23	New Zealand	6.09	5.69	4.32
24	Switzerland	5.28	5.68	6.17
25	Tanzania	5.49	5.67	8.27
26	Philippines	5.99	5.66	6.71
27	Japan	5.50	5.62	4.54
28	Bangladesh	5.63	5.58	7.69
29	Nigeria	5.82	5.56	6.66
30	South Korea	5.28	5.45	5.36
31	Czech Republic	5.18	5.28	3.70
32	Morocco	4.79	5.25	4.88
33	France	5.29	5.24	5.69
34	Poland	4.76	5.23	4.90
35	Greece	5.28	5.22	4.06
36	Hungary	5.05	5.21	4.57
37	Brazil	5.46	5.19	4.06

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Table 3. Continued.

Rank	Country	Unweighted	Weighted	Attitudinal
38	Indonesia	5.57	5.05	5.28
39	Uganda	5.42	5.05	7.33
40	Egypt	5.01	5.01	8.64
41	Jordan	5.01	4.99	8.39
42	Slovenia	4.72	4.93	3.90
43	Estonia	4.35	4.88	3.91
44	Iran	5.01	4.72	6.67
45	Venezuela	4.22	4.66	4.37
46	Slovakia	4.87	4.62	3.33
47	Croatia	4.82	4.62	3.38
48	Algeria	5.27	4.48	4.93
49	India	4.69	4.46	5.89
50	Belarus	3.95	4.41	3.07
51	Moldova	3.92	4.33	2.45
52	El Salvador	3.93	4.27	4.98
53	Latvia	4.08	4.16	4.07
54	Bulgaria	4.00	4.07	2.86
55	Argentina	3.89	4.03	1.98
56	Ukraine	3.85	4.02	1.94
57	Romania	3.69	3.92	2.38
58	Serbia/Yugoslavia	3.97	3.89	3.94
59	Zimbabwe	3.96	3.82	4.12
60	Mexico	3.44	3.55	2.72
61	Bosnia Herzegovina	3.40	3.54	3.56
62	Turkey	4.30	3.39	3.32
63	Albania	3.54	3.27	4.23
64	Lithuania	2.82	3.22	1.81
65	Peru	3.28	3.13	2.61
66	Macedonia	3.01	2.97	1.83
67	Colombia	3.15	2.95	4.11
68	Georgia	3.02	2.90	3.52
69	Dominican Republic	2.35	2.86	0.89
70	Armenia	2.73	2.83	2.42
71	Pakistan	2.62	2.41	3.30
72	Russia	2.41	2.27	1.49

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Table 4. Legitimacy scores, by region, by weighted

	Unweighted	Weighted	Attitudinal
Western Europe/Anglo-America			
Denmark	7.72	7.62	8.20
Norway	7.29	7.61	8.10
Netherlands	6.87	7.13	7.28
Canada	7.00	7.03	7.57
Austria	6.88	7.00	7.30
Finland	6.86	6.98	7.41
Sweden	6.81	6.93	7.01
United States	6.72	6.82	7.12
Germany	6.53	6.68	7.23
Belgium	6.76	6.64	5.67
Ireland	6.73	6.48	7.78
Portugal	6.27	6.39	6.52
Australia	6.73	6.38	5.43
Spain	6.26	6.28	6.33
Britain	6.22	6.28	6.39
Italy	6.24	5.90	4.59
New Zealand	6.09	5.69	4.32
Switzerland	5.28	5.68	6.17
France	5.29	5.24	5.69
Greece	5.28	5.22	4.06
Post-communist Europe			
Azerbaijan	6.08	6.78	5.99
Czech Republic	5.18	5.28	3.70
Poland	4.76	5.23	4.90
Hungary	5.05	5.21	4.57
Slovenia	4.72	4.93	3.90
Estonia	4.35	4.88	3.91
Slovakia	4.87	4.62	3.33
Croatia	4.82	4.62	3.38
Belarus	3.95	4.41	3.07
Moldova	3.92	4.33	2.45
Latvia	4.08	4.16	4.07
Bulgaria	4.00	4.07	2.86
Ukraine	3.85	4.02	1.94
Romania	3.69	3.92	2.38
Serbia/Yugoslavia	3.97	3.89	3.94

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Table 4. Continued.

	Unweighted	Weighted	Attitudinal
Bosnia Herzegovina	3.40	3.54	3.56
Albania	3.54	3.27	4.23
Lithuania	2.82	3.22	1.81
Macedonia	3.01	2.97	1.83
Georgia	3.02	2.90	3.52
Armenia	2.73	2.83	2.42
Russia	2.41	2.27	1.49
Latin America			
Uruguay	6.00	5.94	4.22
Chile	5.58	5.81	5.55
Brazil	5.46	5.19	4.06
Venezuela	4.22	4.66	4.37
El Salvador	3.93	4.27	4.98
Argentina	3.89	4.03	1.98
Mexico	3.44	3.55	2.72
Peru	3.28	3.13	2.61
Colombia	3.15	2.95	4.11
Dominican Republic	2.35	2.86	0.89
Middle East/North Africa			
Morocco	4.79	5.25	4.88
Egypt	5.01	5.01	8.64
Jordan	5.01	4.99	8.39
Iran	5.01	4.72	6.67
Algeria	5.27	4.48	4.93
Turkey	4.30	3.39	3.32
Pakistan	2.62	2.41	3.30
Sub-Saharan Africa			
South Africa	6.22	6.24	6.17
Tanzania	5.49	5.67	8.27
Nigeria	5.82	5.56	6.66
Uganda	5.42	5.05	7.33
Zimbabwe	3.96	3.82	4.12
Asia			
Taiwan	6.58	6.62	6.31
China	6.21	6.58	8.50
Philippines	5.99	5.66	6.71
Japan	5.50	5.62	4.54

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Table 4. Continued.

	Unweighted	Weighted	Attitudinal
Bangladesh	5.63	5.58	7.69
South Korea	5.28	5.45	5.36
Indonesia	5.57	5.05	5.28
India	4.69	4.46	5.89

different aggregation strategies can be seen by examining the overall correlations among the three series as well as the average differences for each country (the mean absolute deviations). The correlations (out of a possible 1) among the three series are as follows:

	A	B
A. Unweighted		
B. Weighted	0.98	
C. Attitudinal	0.81	0.79

The mean absolute deviations (on the 10-point scale) across the 72 countries are as follows:

	A	B
A. Unweighted		
B. Weighted	0.23	
C. Attitudinal	0.93	0.96

It is no surprise that the unweighted and weighted scores are so close since they are different only in terms of a shift in weightings. However it is more of a surprise that overall the attitudinal scores so closely approximate the other two as well. The correlations show the degree of overall fit, while the deviations show how that translates on average into an approximately one point difference on the 10-point scale between the attitudinal and other scores. Given that the distance between the lowest and highest scores in the unweighted and

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weighted scores is just over five points, this amounts to something like an 18 per cent margin of difference on average between the attitudinal and the other two series.

None of this argues for which is a better series. However, if the arguments in favour of the constitutive formulation used in this article are convincing, then it means that this approach yields results that are on average 18 per cent better than conventional approaches using attitudinal surveys as substitutive indicators. Put another way, the figures above provide a measure of the improvement that is provided by the fully theorized measure of legitimacy.

Taken at face value, a few descriptive statements can be made from Tables 3 and 4. It is little surprise that nine of the top ten places are occupied by states in the Western Europe/Anglo-America region, while six of the bottom ten are occupied by the new states of post-communist Europe. Across regions, legitimacy levels are highest in Western Europe/Anglo-America, followed by Asia. The states in Latin America, Africa and post-communist Europe show a wide range of scores, while Middle Eastern/North African states generally suffer from low legitimacy. One of the most notable results here is that, unlike modernization theory's claims, at least in the case of legitimacy, all good things do not *always* go together. The ranking shows some jarring results as to which countries rank above others in terms of citizen perceptions and behaviour indicative of subjective legitimacy. Long-established democracies in New Zealand (23rd) and France (33rd) rank far down on the list, both behind newly democratic Taiwan (12th) and South Africa (19th). The two biggest outliers appear to be Azerbaijan (9th), a failed post-Soviet democracy, and China (13th), the world's last great communist dictatorship, both of which score comfortably higher than well-established democracies in their respective regions and elsewhere.

While the overall fit between the three series is good, the differences loom much larger in particular cases. The heavier weighting on views of justification in the weighted series leads to losses of more than 0.5 points for Turkey, Algeria and Indonesia, mainly because of their high levels of political violence. Azerbaijan, Estonia and the Dominican Republic, by contrast, all gain more than 0.5 points as a result of the added weight on justification. Countries that perform particularly well in attitudinal surveys lose significantly when we move to the constitutively driven weighted series. Egypt and Jordan lose more than three points each, while Tanzania, Uganda and Bangladesh all lose more than two points. A further seven countries lose more than a point. By contrast, largely negative attitudes are mitigated by the constitutive legitimacy scores in many other cases. Argentina and the Ukraine both gain more than two points, while a further 17 countries gain more than a point each.

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Correlates of legitimacy

The brief comments above suffice to show that a fully theorized measure of legitimacy gives results that, while largely conforming to intuitions, nonetheless surprise in many ways. As a more rigorous check on validity, it is useful to look at look at how several well-known causal hypotheses do or do not correlate with the scores. In doing so, we achieve two things: one is to ensure that such tests do not produce results that are simply inexplicable and thus throw into question the validity of the legitimacy scores; beyond that, such tests open a window on future research into the causes and consequences of legitimacy by showing what factors tend to be associated with higher legitimacy.

Since there are convergent (expected link) as well as discriminant (no expected link) validity tests, as well as causes and effects of legitimacy, we have a total of four different types of validity tests. There is much potential overlap between such indicators to test legitimacy and indicators to measure legitimacy. However, as we have chosen to measure legitimacy here, the overlap is minimal. The high correlations of the effect-based indicators used in views of legality suggest they can properly be included in the measurement itself. Meanwhile, political violence is both conceptually as well as empirically distinct from political instability, which might be a potential effect-based convergent test.

Even prior to engaging in statistical inquiry, it appears that states ranked higher on the list have more stable constitutional orders, less political instability and better quality democracies. When we look to the regional rankings, the ordering is less certain, but the overall picture remains intuitively logical. There is, in other words, a *prima-facie* basis for believing that the scores are valid. To test this, I have gathered together several important hypothesized variables that fit into the four possible types of validity tests. I show the correlations between these variables and our weighted series in Table 5. I have chosen validity tests that explicitly address the conceptual claims made about legitimacy above. Three hypothesized causal indicators – good governance, poverty reduction and the provision of civil liberties – are all types of state performance that would reasonably be expected to generate legitimacy, taken as a 'common good' orientation. They all show moderate to strong positive correlations, as does social trust, the one socio-economic condition tested here that is partially engendered by the state. By contrast, other socio-economic conditions that are not related to state performance – population size, ethnic homogeneity and social deference norms – all correlate at low levels. The one exception is aggregate levels of personal financial satisfaction across countries, which shows a moderate correlation. This indicator is perhaps the rawest form

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of self-interest and its correlation to legitimacy levels is troubling because it suggests a far from complete separation between self-interest and common-good-based forms of political support.

The most obvious consequence of legitimacy that could be used as an effect-based validity test is political stability (which can be tested without serious endogeneity problems given the correlation of r = 0.69 between our political violence indicator and the political stability indicator, as well as the former's only one-quarter weighting in the weighted series). This shows the expected moderate to strong positive correlation. The lesser war-proneness of legitimate states might be captured by military spending as a share of GDP. Given the many factors that determine military spending, we should be satisfied by showing that there is a significant positive correlation. This is the result here.

Finally, we would expect to find a reasonable degree of separation between the legitimacy of states as measured here and the legitimacy of governments, even if, as discussed, there may be good reasons (i.e., reasons that do not challenge the notion of an autonomous state) for some overlap. We want to test whether this separation is sufficient to validate the measurement here and the conception of the state as a distinct object of legitimacy. The two government support indicators mentioned earlier correlate at moderate levels (0.43 and 0.51), reflecting a significant the degree of separation between these

Table 5. Results of validity tests for legitimacy (correlation coefficients)

	Convergent	Discriminant
Cause	Social trust: 0.52	Population size: 0.07
	Poverty reduction: 0.49	Financial satisfaction: 0.43
	Good governance: 0.73	Social deference: 0.21
	Civil liberties: 0.62	Ethnic homogeneity: 0.15
Effect	Political stability: 0.64	Government support A: 0.51
	Lower military spending/GDP: 0.23	Government support B: 0.43

Sources: Social Trust: World Values Survey, 1999–2002 (WVS), Question 25; Poverty Reduction: Under-1 infant mortality, 2001, log score, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Good Governance: World Bank Institute, Governance Indicators, 2000 (WBI), Average of Control of Corruption, Rule of Law and Government Effectiveness; Civil Liberties: Freedom House, Civil Liberties, 1999–2000; Political Stability: WBI, Political Instability score; Lower Military Spending/GDP: 1999, Chamberlin 2004, Table 2; Population Size: 2000, UNDP; Financial Satisfaction: WVS, Question 80; Social Deference: WVS, Question 105; Ethnic Homogeneity: Fearon 2003; Government Support A: WVS, Question 174; Government Support B: WVS, Question 153.

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objects of legitimacy. Put another way, in a bivariate regression, the legitimacy of governments would explain only between a fifth and a quarter of variations in the legitimacy of states.

The interpretation of particular results must be open to disagreement, but as a whole the validity tests fit our intuitive sense of the causes and consequences of legitimacy. It is tempting at this point to head into multivariate analysis to discover the causes and consequences of legitimacy, but that is a further topic for future research. Indeed, it is the main point of this article that researchers have been too eager to get at these important questions and as a result have paid insufficient attention to how to conceptualize and operationalize legitimacy itself. I will end by returning to the questions of meaning that must ultimately provide the main validation of any cross-national measure of legitimacy.

Heterogeneity and qualitative measurement

Ultimately, the value of the legitimacy scores derived must be found in their usefulness in explaining case-by-case variations a world of disaggregated realities. The question, then, is whether the scores, which assume a certain level of homogeneity across cases, are meaningful enough once we reintroduce the full heterogeneity of the cases. Heterogeneity is both a reliability and validity question. A major validity question hanging over all indicators, attitudinal and behavioural, is that of cross-cultural meaning. Aside from cross-cultural meanings, validity may be challenged by heterogeneity in other respects. We noted earlier, for example, how the assumption of equal citizen importance as subjects was at best an approximation across the contingencies of politics. If so, then the varying importance of different subject-groups within each country would need to be considered for each case to see how well this approximation fits the reality. In addition, authoritarian regimes may give systematically different scores on the sub-types due to such factors as fear, repression and information failures. Again, the assumption of regime-type neutrality is at best an approximation across these contingencies that would have to be reconsidered in particular cases. Thus, qualitative analysis will remain indispensable to a full rendering of a quantitative legitimacy score in any one case.

The need for supplemental qualitative data make us wary of definitive statements based on quantitative scores, but should not prevent probabilistic ones. The greater the separation of data scores across chosen countries, the more confident we can be that in making general claims based on the scores derived above. Indeed, there is, hopefully, a necessary complementarity between the large-n statistical and small-n qualitative measurements. As mentioned, an important reason for undertaking a fully-conceptualized

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cross-national measure of state legitimacy is to add some perspective to the qualitative case studies themselves. Too frequently, studies of legitimacy that lack a cross-national reach proclaim a 'legitimacy crisis' in the state or states under consideration (Habermas 1975; Hudson 1977; Kateb 1979; Gamble 1988; Zhong 1996). If we are concerned with the performance of states in some realistic sense, then quantitative approaches such as that used here are not mere poor cousins of qualitative ones, but necessary complements to them. Elsewhere I have studied legitimacy in Malaysia using such a mixed cross-national quantitative and single-case qualitative approach (Gilley 2005). Such an approach gives us a full rendering of the complex, but critical, concept of state legitimacy.

Conclusion

This article represents a preliminary attempt to formulate a common and replicable standard for measuring the legitimacy of states. As one of the most important variables in political science (both explanatory and dependent), legitimacy is sorely in need of such a common approach. Two main theoretical challenges were posed. One is whether legitimacy as a concept 'works' or is too 'mushy' for the hardscrabble world of 'domination and resistance' that is claimed to best describe politics. This question cannot be fully answered here, but validity tests suggest good reason to think these measures can be shown to correlate to some well-known expected results of legitimate government, such as political stability. Second, even if legitimacy matters, is it too case-specific concept to be measured effectively? Again, the rankings here, especially within the presumably more homogenous regional groupings, seem reasonable. There is nothing to show that useful cross-national measures are impossible *per se*, even if their precision may depend on supplemental qualitative work. At the level needed for cross-national comparative studies, the measure here seems meaningful enough. Many issues remain unresolved concerning the conceptualization and operationalization of the concept, as well as its enhancement through qualitative study. If these challenges are taken up, we can reasonably hope that legitimacy may be recalled from the margins of political science to the central place it once held.

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Appendix A. Summary of indicators

Legitimacy sub-type	Indicator	Source	Coding/measure	Mean score	Constitutive or substitutive	Attitude or behaviour
Views of legality	Evaluation of state respect for individual human rights	World Values Survey, 1999–2002, Question 173	A lot (1); some (2); not much (3); none at all (4) – percentage (1) or (2)	55.1%	Constitutive	Attitude
	Confidence in police	World Values Survey, 1999–2002, Question 152	A great deal (1); quite a lot (2); not very much (3); none at all (4) – percentage (1) or (2)	54.5%	Substitutive	Attitude
	Confidence in civil service	World Values Survey, 1999–2002, Question 156	A great deal (1); quite a lot (2); not very much (3); none at all (4) – percentage (1) or (2)	43.8%	Substitutive	Attitude
Views of justification	Satisfaction with democratic development	World Values Survey, 1999–2002, Question 168	Very satisfied (1); rather satisfied (2); not very satisfied (3); not at all satisfied (4) – percentage (1) or (2)	47.3%	Constitutive	Attitude
	Evaluation of current political system	World Values Survey, 1999–2002, Question 163A	Bad (1) to very good (10) – mean score	4.7	Constitutive	Attitude

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	Satisfaction with operation of democracy	GlobalBarometer regional surveys, 2001–2002; EuroBarometer, 2001; EuroCandidate, 2002	Very satisfied (1); fairly satisfied (2); not very satisfied (3); not at all satisfied (4) – percentage (1) or (2)	46.5%	Constitutive	Attitude
	Use of violence in civil protest	*World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators IV*, 1996–2000	Percentage of civil actions that involve violence	21.1%	Substitutive	Behaviour
Acts of consent	Voter turnout	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1996–2002	Percentage of voting-age population casting ballots in national legislative election	63.2%	Constitutive	Behaviour
	Quasi-voluntary taxes	International Monetary Fund, *Government Finance Yearbook*, 1996–2002	Combined revenues from taxes on income, profits, capital gains and property as a percentage of total central government revenues excluding social security revenues	31.9%	Constitutive	Behaviour

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