PH.D. THESIS

Towards Legitimacy as Congruence

Regimes' Menus of Legitimation and Citizens' Appetites

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Doctoral Dissertation in Political Science
Department of Political Science
University of Gothenburg
2022

Printing: Stema, Borås, 2022
ISBN: 978-91-8009-847-2 (print)
ISBN: 978-91-8009-848-9 (pdf)
http://hdl.handle.net/2077/71421 (epub)
This dissertation is included as number 175 in Göteborg Studies in Politics, edited by Johannes Lindvall, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.

To Clara, Julius, and Mio

Abstract

Legitimacy is one of the most crucial concepts in political science. It concerns how authority can be exercised in ways that those subjected to it willingly accept, something that all rulers desire. It is also one of the most contested concepts in the field, largely due to the difficulty of measurement. In this dissertation, I lay the foundations for a novel understanding of legitimacy, as the congruence between rulers' legitimation claims – their menus of legitimation – and the values and preferences – the appetites – of their citizens. In four separate research papers, I show the importance and utility of this approach. I provide empirical evidence that existing measures of legitimacy and its neighboring concepts, such as trust and popular support, suffer from a substantial autocratic bias. Self-censorship in autocratic countries results in inflated regime-friendly evaluations compared to in democracies. I conceptualize and develop measures of the most typical legitimation claims that rulers provide as justifications for why they are entitled to rule. I then match this expert coded data with global public opinion data to create measures of congruence between menus and appetites across five dimensions. Legitimacy as congruence provides a relational and multidimensional understanding of legitimacy, aligning the concept and its measurement. I show the value of this new measure in predicting outcomes for which the literature has strong theoretical expectations. I conclude that existing approaches to measuring legitimacy are flawed for the comparison across regime types, and that conceptualizing and operationalizing legitimacy as congruence provide an avenue to move the field forward.

Sammanfattning på Svenska

Legitimitet är ett av statsvetenskapens mest centrala begrepp. Det handlar om hur makt kan utövas så att medborgarna frivilligt lyder, något som alla makthavare önskar. Till följd av svårigheten att mäta legitimitet är det ett särskilt omtvistat begrepp. I den här avhandlingen föreslår jag en ny förståelse av legitimitet som *legitimacy as congruence*, där avståndet mellan makthavares legitimeringsstrategier – deras *menus of legitimation* – och medborgarnas värderingar och preferenser – deras *appetites* – avgör hur legitimt ett politiskt system är. I fyra separata forskningsartiklar visar jag på vikten och nyttan av detta sätt att tänka på legitimitet. Jag visar att befintliga mått på legitimitet och dess närliggande begrepp, som tillit och regimstöd, lider av en betydande autokratisk bias. Självcensur i auktoritära länder leder till artificiellt högt stöd jämfört med i demokratier. Jag utvecklar mått på de vanligast förekommande legitimeringsstrategier som ledare använder som motiv till varför de har rätt till makten och mäter dessa globalt. Jag kombinerar sedan denna expert-kodade data med opinionsdata för att skapa mått på kongruensen mellan meny och aptit i fem dimensioner. Jag visar nyttan av måttet i en empirisk analys genom att predicera politisk stabilitet och repression, två utkomster för vilka litteraturen har starka teoretiska förväntningar. Avhandlingen visar att tidigare tillvägagångssätt för att konceptualisera och mäta legitimitet är bristfälliga om vi är intresserade av att jämföra stater med olika typer av regimer, samt att legitimitet som kongruens kan öppna upp nya vägar för framtida forskning.

Acknowledgements

It was clear from the start that this would be a long journey. Then I took the scenic route. Despite the extra miles traveled and the blisters suffered, it has been remarkably enjoyable. This is thanks to everyone who I will mention here: you are the very best of travel companions. As I think about what you all mean to me and the help you have given, I understand that I have acquired more debts than I can ever repay.

First and foremost, I owe special thanks to my supervisors Staffan I. Lindberg and Ellen Lust. I am so very grateful for your limitless support and generosity. I presented you with many occasions to doubt me, but I never felt that you did. On the contrary, you were always encouraging when I pursued my various projects despite their not-always obvious relevance for my dissertation. There is much I admire in both of you, but amongst your most impressive skills is your ability to bend time and space to make time for meetings and providing excellent feedback, despite that an overlay of your calendars suggest it impossible. Without you, this dissertation would never have materialized.

I have had the benefit of directly involving fantastic co-authors in this dissertation: Anna Lührmann, Michael Bernhard, Christian von Soest, Johannes Gerschewski, and Darrel Robinson. You are great scholars and friends. It has been a privilege to learn from you.

There is no department where I rather would have done my PhD. I cannot imagine a place with as many smart and friendly people and with as many exciting research environments. I have been lucky to have had the best, the most helpful, and friendliest PhD cohort. Anne Katrin-Kreft, Moa Frödin Gruneau, Mattias Agerberg, and Felix Hartmann, I have enjoyed every second of your company at the office, the countless lunches and coffee breaks, and during our travels. My only complaint is that you finished too fast. Despite that many in the subsequent cohorts continued the very poor behavior of finishing before me as well, I appreciate you for having made these years so fun. Maria Tyrberg, Valeriya Mechkova, Love Christensen, and Felix Dwinger, and Ezgi Irgil, thank you for being my friends.

I am further fortunate to have been part of the V-Dem Institute. Staffan, what you have built is nothing short of amazing, yet even more amazing are the people who have been part of V-Dem over these years. Josefine Pernes, Natasha Stepanova, Johannes von Römer, Lisa Gastaldi, Nazifa Alizada, Rick Morgan, Laura Maxwell, Kyle Marquardt, Amanda Egdell, Sebastian Hellmaier, Vanessa Boese, Natalia Natsika, Sandra Grahn, Yuko Sato, Matthew Wilson, Steven Wilson, Jurai Medzihorsky, Jean Lachapelle, and Oscar Rydén, it has been my distinct pleasure to get to know and hang out with you. You are all so smart and kind. Anna Lührmann deserves another mention here too, thank you for always being a great mentor and friend.

I have also benefitted from being part of Ellen's research group, GLD, and have treasured the company and wisdom of all the lovely people there. Thank you, Adam Harris, Ruth Carlitz, Kristen Kao, and my burger-bros Ben Akniyemi and Sebastian Nickel. Additional thanks to Seb for being a great friend and a real-life version of stackoverflow.

I am grateful to everyone at QoG for always making me feel welcome in the group where my academic career started. Bo Rothstein, you were first to suggest that I should

pursue a PhD, and were it not for the generosity and the collegiality that you showed, I do not think I would have. Thank you: Anna Persson, Marcia Grimes, Marina Nistotskaya, Carl Dahlström, Stefan Dahlberg, Andreas Bågenholm, Victor Lapuente, Dali Sabanic, Alice Johansson and Sofia Axelsson (my oldest friend at the department!). What a group to go conferencing with! I am further thankful to Aksel Sundström and Martin Sjöstedt, for your advice and friendship. I look forward to climbing and playing squash with you soon.

For a being great colleagues and generally making the department the wonderful place that it is, thank you: Petrus Olander, Marina Povitkina, Kety Bolkvadze, Aiysha Varraich, Elin Bergman, Frida Nilsson, Magnus Åsblad, Amanda Linell, Felicia Robertsson, Elias Markstedt, Adea Gafuri, Stephen Dawson, Dragana Davidovic, Nicholas Sorak, Prisca Jöst, Berker Kavasoglu, Tove Wikehult, Rasmus Broms, Erik Vestin, Olof Larsson, Anders Sundell, Frida Boräng, Caroline Fällgren, Jacob Sohlberg, Maria Solevid, Andrej Kokkonen, Agnes Cornell, Rikard Svensson, and Henrik Friberg-Fernros.

I am further grateful to Carl Dahlström and Mikael Persson for managing the PhD program so well, and to Lena Caspers who have always been beyond helpful. I also want to extend my appreciation to Monika Bauhr and Alexander Dukalskis for commenting on an early draft, and to Nicholas Charron and Georgios Xezonakis for reading the entire manuscript. This dissertation is a much better product thanks to your thoughtful comments.

Thank you, Karen Feree for inviting me to spend a semester at UC San Diego. I enjoyed the exchange tremendously. Eddie Yang, Shane Xuan, and Brian Engelsma, thank you for making me feel part of the gang.

To my family. Thank you for always being there and for being a reminder of what is truly important. Mom and dad, there is nothing I can say. I owe you everything. Philip, thank you for allowing me to cruise in your slipstream, not only in our Swimrun races, but in life.

Writing this section, it is apparent that I have been blessed with a fantastic job, yet nothing is better than coming home. Clara, Julius and Mio, you were perhaps the least involved in this, I love you the most.

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1 Introduction

This dissertation is about legitimacy, how it should be conceptualized and what we need to know to be able to measure it. Legitimacy is one of the most crucial and at the same time most contested concepts in political science (Lipset 1959; Barker 1990; Beetham 1991; Weatherford 1992; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). The concept is meant to capture the beliefs that underpin "willing obedience" and compliance with the rules and directives of the authorities (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). As such, it is central to virtually every political community as "the core of political organization" (Alagappa 1995, p. 3). All rulers desire willing obedience from their subjects. It enables them to spend fewer resources, ensuring compliance that can instead be devoted to prolonging their tenure (Alagappa 1995). Legitimacy, or the lack thereof, has been attributed to affect tax compliance (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009), voter turnout, the rise of populists (Doyle 2011), protests, violence, and ultimately the breakdown or survival of both autocratic regimes (Burnell 2006) and liberal democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996). In a legitimate political system, rules are obeyed because they are perceived as justified. Rulers may offer varying claims to legitimacy and the ruled can accept them or not.

Despite the concept's importance and a long research tradition, legitimacy is by no means a settled concept (see Przeworski 2005), and some go so far as to suggest that we abandon legitimacy as a concept in the social sciences (e.g., Marquez 2016; O'Kane 1993). Much of the controversy and critique stems from the apparent difficulty of measuring the concept of legitimacy in a reasonably accurate and unbiased way. Where do existing measures fall short and what is needed to advance beyond the existing approaches?

First, there is a common conceptual mismatch: most conceptualizations of legitimacy are relational but existing operationalizations are not. Legitimacy is inherently relational and it is therefore necessary to take both the regime and the citizen side into account to understand the legitimacy of a regime. To do this I develop a conceptualization of legitimacy as the degree of *congruence* between a set of legitimacy claims pursued by the rulers – their *menus of legitimation* – and the values and preferences – *the appetites* – of their citizens. This allows for both sides to vary, as opposed to just the citizen-side. Rulers provide a menu of justifications for their regime, and citizens, guided by their appetite, either reject or have some or all that is offered on the menu of legitimation. Legitimacy is the sum of congruence – or the match between the two – in each dimension.

Existing approaches to empirical legitimacy focus exclusively on the citizen-side of the equation (Booth and Seligson 2009; Gilley 2009; Doyle 2011). In order to account for the regime side, in paper 1 we conceptualize and develop measures of the most typical legitimation claims that rulers provide as justifications for why they are entitled to rule. These are measures of the strategies that rulers use to obtain legitimacy and not a measure of legitimacy itself. Building on theoretical work in comparative politics and political sociology, we distinguish five primary legitimation strategies: personalism, performance, rational-legal procedures, ideological and tradition-based claims and measure the extent to which governments rely on each respective strategy for legitimating their regime using V-Dem's expert survey coding methods. These data are necessary for creating a truly relational measure of legitimacy but also represent a stand-alone contribution to the field. It is the first ever cross-sectional and longitudinal data on legitimation claims that cuts across the democracy-autocracy divide.

Existing measures of legitimacy are troubled by three distinct forms of bias: *normative*, *behavioral* and a *self-censorship* induced bias. The first can be avoided by not using a static normative benchmark against which legitimacy beliefs are measured, and the second by staying clear of any behavioral indicators, election turnout, tax compliance or protests, for example, as such acts of consent conflate *regime legitimacy* with the (supposed) effects of having a *legitimate regime*. The problem of defining a concept by its effect is that it prevents investigation into the empirical relationship between the two. The third, a self-censorship induced bias, comes into play with the inclusion of opinion-based measures and is not as easily avoided as the first two given the centrality of citizens' beliefs in assessing the legitimacy of a system. Indeed, most measurements of empirical legitimacy rely heavily on public opinion data (e.g., Gilley 2006; Booth and Seligson 2009; and Power and Cyr 2009).

In more autocratic setting there are strong theoretical expectations that citizens self-censor or practice "preference falsification" with regards to political issues (Kuran 1997). Self-censorship should therefore pose an obstacle to any opinion-based measures relying on sensitive questions when autocratic regimes are included in the sample. This is by no means limited to measures of legitimacy but is a critical issue for comparative public opinion in general, affecting our ability to measure everything from democratic values to approval ratings and corruption perceptions. A central contribution of this dissertation concerns precisely this, as both papers 2 and 3 speak to this important and growing literature on self-censorship. To date, existing empirical findings are mixed. A handful of studies show self-censorship to be problematic for measuring public opinion in autocracies (Jiang and Yang 2016; Kalinin 2016), while others find self-censorship to be a minor concern (Frye et al. 2017; Shen and Truex 2020) or even non-existent (Lei and Lu 2017; Tang 2016). Contributing to this literature, paper 2 provides a critical test – in a most likely case – of the influence of self-censorship on measures of regime support. In the paper we employ a set of list experiments in China, which is often accredited with extraordinarily high levels of trust and regime support, but which is also an autocratic country with considerable capacity for both surveillance and repression. If we do not observe self-censorship here, we likely need not worry about it in autocracies in general. The findings suggest that we do in

fact need to worry, as respondents substantively self-censor their regime support in a standard survey setting (Robinson and Tannenberg 2019). Paper 2 makes a direct contribution to the literature on self-censorship and political support in China and authoritarian regimes more broadly: researchers studying opinion in autocratic countries probably do not want to dismiss self-censorship so lightheartedly (c.f. Geddes and Zaller 1989). Specifically, the findings suggest that studies that argue that the Chinese regime enjoys an unusually high degree of popular support or legitimacy are likely based on upwardly biased estimates (Tang 2016; Li 2004; Wang 2005a; Zhong 2014).

With paper 2 offering experimental evidence that self-censorship is an obstacle to accurately capturing public opinion and legitimacy beliefs in China, there are two additional things we need to know in the pursuit of building better measures of legitimacy. First, to what extent does self-censorship occur in other autocratic regimes with varying capacities for surveillance and repression? Second, which particular survey items are affected the most by self-censorship and, crucially, which items are the least affected? In paper 3 I use observational data across 37 African countries and a simple research design utilizing respondents' beliefs about the survey sponsor, to test if a large set of survey items commonly used in comparative public opinion suffer from an autocratic bias. I show that more autocratic regimes enjoy inflated regime-friendly responses on a range of items, including those used in operationalizations of legitimacy and its neighboring concepts. By contrast, apolitical questions and items for which the answer-options do not force the respondent to reveal their inclination towards the rulers are not affected by perceived survey sponsorship (Tannenberg 2021). The paper provides a contribution to the field of comparative public opinion in general and to the literatures on legitimacy, trust, approval, corruption and democratic values in particular.

These difficulties with measuring public opinion notwithstanding, any operationalization of legitimacy must include the opinions and preferences of the population that grants legitimacy to a regime. My strategy for creating a better measure of legitimacy is to avoid the indicators that are most prone to self-censorship (for example, trust in the executive, support for the incumbent party, etc.). Having spent considerable effort on assessing the two key puzzle pieces of the legitimacy equation – the regime and the citizen side – I next suggest a novel approach to match these pieces and for the first time offer true concept-measurement validity.

In paper 4 I introduce the conceptualization of *legitimacy as congruence* across five key dimensions: personalism, performance, rational-legal, ideology, and traditional. I argue that it is only when the rulers' legitimation claim is congruent with citizens' appetite that political rule is truly legitimate. Having outlined the contours of the puzzle pieces in papers 1, 2 and 3, I proceed to operationalize legitimacy by matching expert coded legitimation strategies with a time-series cross-sectional dataset of appetite, using public opinion data utilizing a dynamic Bayesian latent variable model (Claassen 2019). To estimate country-year-level appetite, I utilize 1,662 nationally representative public opinion surveys fielded in 136 countries between 1981 and 2020. I then employ this measure, which is well-suited for across time and across regime comparisons, in an initial empirical application to test the relationship between legitimacy as congruence and two key outcomes for which the literature has

particularly strong theoretical expectations: political stability and repression. First, legitimacy should have a positive relationship with political stability. Disaffected citizens are more likely to abandon within-system participation and engage in destabilizing activities in both democracies (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004) and autocracies (Burnell 2006). Second, the existing literature has strong expectations that rulers that do not enjoy "willing compliance" need more coercive and repressive measures to ensure acquiescence and regime stability (Beetham 1991; Alagappa 1995; Gerschewski 2013). These tests can thus be viewed as a validation of my approach. I show that in line with the theoretical expectations, rulers offering a menu that matches poorly with their citizens' appetite 1) are less stable and 2) use more repression to stay in power. Conversely, rulers in regimes with a better match between menu and appetite enjoy more political stability and use less repression. This first conceptualization and initial operationalization show that legitimacy as congruence has implications for "the cost of ruling," and can help us to better understand the interactions between rulers and ruled.

In summary, this project has outlined what is needed for advancing beyond existing measures of legitimacy and presented a novel conceptualization and preliminary operationalization of legitimacy as congruence. First, we need measures of the regime side, hence paper 1. Second, existing measures suffer greatly from self-censorship as shown in papers 2 and 3. Lastly, this dissertation has taken the first step towards a relational and multidimensional understanding of legitimacy, aligning the concept and its measurement in paper 4.

Table 1: Overview of the Papers

Paper	Focus	Purpose	Type of data
1	Regimes	Concept building and data creation	Original expert coded survey
2	Citizens	Critical test of Self-censorship	Original survey experiment
3	Citizens	Test of scope of Self-censorship	Secondary survey data
4	Regimes and Citizens	Concept building and measurement of concept	Original and secondary data

2 Key theoretical concepts

In this section, I elaborate on the three theoretical concepts that are central to this dissertation: legitimacy, self-censorship and congruence theory. First, I provide a thorough review of existing accounts of legitimacy. Next follows a discussion of self-censorship, which may be induced by regime type. Self-censorship is a key issue that is overlooked in the majority of studies of legitimacy and its neighboring concepts. Lastly, I present a review of congruence theory and some of its existing applications within different subfields of political science.

The concept of legitimacy

Legitimacy is a core concept in political science, yet it remains highly contested (Lipset 1959; Barker 1990; Beetham 1991; Weatherford 1992; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). It goes back to the political writings of the Roman historian Sallust on the conspiracy of Catiline, in which Sallust develops the idea of an imperium legitimum. From its origin, legitimate rule was explicitly delineated from tyrannical rule. The word itself has its origins in Latin, meaning "to make legal," and legitimate rule thus refers to a form of political rule that is in accordance with the laws, that is non-arbitrary and free from despotism.

In the social sciences, legitimacy entails more than laws and rules. At its core the concept concerns how authority can be exercised in ways that those subjected to it willingly accept. It transcends trust or support for the incumbent. It is possible to neither trust nor support an incumbent yet recognize his or her right to exercise authority over you. As all rulers desire willing obedience from their subjects, it is central to virtually every political community as "the core of political organization" (Alagappa 1995, p. 3). In the classical works, legitimacy is viewed as a prerequisite of long-term survival for all political systems (Smith 1970); already in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau argued that no political system can enjoy stability and no ruler maintain power before "he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty" ([1762] 1999, p. 3). In the more recent literature, legitimacy (or the lack thereof) has been attributed to affect the cost of ruling (Alagappa 1995), tax compliance (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009), voter turnout, the rise of populists (Doyle 2011), protests, violence, and ultimately the breakdown or survival of both autocratic regimes (Burnell 2006; Kailitz and Stockemer 2017), and liberal democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996). Given the expectations on legitimacy to have such fundamental and timeless influence it is an especially important topic of study.

Despite a long tradition of theorizing and research, legitimacy is far from agreed upon in the social sciences. A critique of the concept by Przeworski (1991) is that in the eyes of individuals legitimacy simply does not matter for macro phenomenon such as regime stability. For Prezerworski only organized interests matter. I do not agree

with that proposition. However, even if it were true that the power for change ultimately lies in organized interests, the conclusion should not be that legitimacy is irrelevant. First, organized interests did not characterize the protests that toppled Bouteflika in Algeria and Bashir in Sudan, or those that rocked Lukashenka's grip on power in Belarus. These examples show that even unorganized groups of individuals with some form of latent disregard for the system can lead to spontaneous regime threatening protests. As argued by Kuran (1997), when regime support is largely artificial even minor events can trigger bandwagon effects leading to societal change. Second, I adopt an individualistic approach to legitimacy, meaning that legitimacy aggregates to any given unit, subgroup or *organized interest group*, and as such shapes their interests and presumably also their actions. Another line of critique focuses on the methodological challenge of empirically capturing the concept of legitimacy (cf. Marquez 2016; O'Kane 1993). In their view, legitimacy can only be inferred from observable variables such as stability, either when it is in steep decline or once it has fully gone. Much of this critique is warranted and ties in well with Kuran's (1997) theory of how preference falsification disguises levels of legitimacy, and it can help us understand sudden regime change. In the section on obstacles to measurement, I further detail some methodological challenges; particularly those posed by self-censorship, and suggest how to overcome them. I argue that with some effort it is possible to measure empirical legitimacy as congruence, and if it is as important as the classical literature suggests then it should have observable testable effects (Booth and Seligson 2009).

Normative and empirical legitimacy

Before delving further into the concept, I note the distinction between *normative* and *empirical* legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy occupies a central position in democratic theory and political philosophy. It concerns the morality of political obligation and originates in the works of Hobbes and Locke. Legitimate rule refers here to what a good political order should look like and is associated with what is fair, right, and just. In contrast to the normative tradition, Max Weber set the ground for a different understanding of legitimacy (Weber [1922] 1978), that legitimate power is simply power that is regarded as legitimate. Instead of pursuing what is good rule, he advocated an empirical usage of the concept. Following this line of reasoning, employing a universal measure of what is normatively legitimate, and what is not, is blind to variation in citizens' belief of what are appropriate political institutions and processes (Weber 1978). Regardless of how appealing liberal democracy is, a normative approach prohibits research on legitimacy in autocracies. Such an approach overlooks that autocracies can enjoy regime support among either a broad range or subsets of the population (Burnell 2006), and that the variation between autocracies is not only explained by differences of political liberalization (Nathan 2007).

A strict empirical usage of the term makes it possible to extend legitimacy from democratic theory to the empirical study of both democratic and autocratic regimes (Gerschewski 2018). Despite the critique that Weber's empirical understanding of legitimacy effectively made it impossible to judge legitimacy and illegitimacy according to rational and objective standards, most political scientist studying legitimacy adopt the empirical approach (Lipset 1959; Easton 1965; Booth and Seligson 2009;

Gilley 2009). Yet, the normative roots still influence and bias both conceptualization and operationalization.

Legitimacy is relational

Empirical legitimacy is inherently relational. It is a product of the relationship between the regime and the citizens subjected to it. Take Lipset's (1960) definition of political legitimacy as an example: the degree to which the ruler of a regime manages to "engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society" (Lipset 1960, p. 86). It is the regime that has some degree of legitimacy, but it is the belief of the citizens subjected to the regime that determine whether or not it has this attribute. This understanding of legitimacy has two consequences of particular interest to the study of legitimacy in a comparative perspective. First, it acknowledges that some societies may not believe that democratic institutions are "the most appropriate ones." Second, it recognizes that rulers of regimes, democratic or not, can influence the citizens' perceptions of what constitutes "the most appropriate" institutions: they can offer and seek to invoke different forms of legitimacy. It is therefore important to take *both* the regime and the citizen side into account to understand the legitimacy of a system. Legitimacy refers not only to the claims of the rulers but also to the reception of such claims by the ruled. It is a process that entails the ruler's claims to justify that rule and their acceptance by those subjected to it. Only when ruler's claims are congruent with citizens' beliefs can we observe legitimate rule.

Theorizing types and dimensions of legitimacy

In his classical work, Weber ([1922] 1978) distinguished between three types of legitimate authority: rational-legal, charismatic, and traditional rule. Rational-legal authority is based on the existence of an extensive, binding, and consistent set of laws which regulate the exercise of power. Under systems of rational-legal authority, rule is exercised by officials following a set of rules (the law). Those exercising domination in a legal form of authority are usually selected by special means such as election (democracy or oligarchy), although even their authority is usually subject to constraint by the law. Citizens' obedience is thus owed to a legally established and predictable order.

Charismatic authority rests "...on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber [1922] 1978, p. 215). In contrast to the impersonal and rule-bound order of rational-legal legitimacy, in charisma-based legitimacy obedience is owed to the person of the leader due to his or her extraordinary capabilities. Traditional rule is grounded "on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them" (Weber [1922] 1978 p. 215), and citizens' obedience is owed on the basis of adherence to this tradition.

Weber's three types of legitimacy are certainly at play in today's world. Democracies typically rely heavily – and liberal democracies perhaps close to exclusively – on rational-legal legitimacy. Although autocratic regimes can also draw upon this type

of legitimacy, particularly those which manage to successfully manipulate elections (Rose and Mishler 2009), they often appeal to something beyond democratic procedures in claiming their right to rule (Nathan 2003; Holbig and Gilley 2010; Brusis 2015; Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017). For example, we observe attempts to justify rule based on the charisma of the leader in countries such as Russia (Holmes 2010) and Cambodia (Morgenbesser 2018). Weber's traditional type would include the God-given, natural and historic legitimation claimed by, for example, the monarchs across the Middle East that appeal to long historical traditions or the theocratic regime in Iran that invokes religious legitimacy (Yom and Gause 2012). Yet, Weber's three ideal types are not encompassing enough to include all the types of legitimacy observed. For example, it leaves no room for ideological types of legitimation, for which the source of legitimation lies in the future (in realizing or striving towards some form of utopia), that is beyond history, charisma, or the procedures of the regime. In categorizing the types of legitimacy present in the Arab world, Hudson (1977) identified personal, ideological and structural as the core foundations of regime legitimacy. Given the importance rulers have placed on nationalism, socialism and communism in creating a following amongst its citizenry (Linz 2000; Holbig 2013; Dukalskis 2017), forward-looking ideology deserves its place as a specific type or dimension in which rulers can claim and gain legitimacy.

Additionally, performance may cause large segments of the society to accept or support autocratic rule (Geddes and Zaller 1989; Schlumberger 2010; Zhu 2011). Performance related sources of legitimacy are those that come from the success (or perceived success) of meeting the citizen's material needs. Performance-based support is generally attributed to the regime following economic growth, low unemployment, physical security, etc., but can come to encompass additional dimensions, depending on the values of the citizens. The central question here is whether citizens perceive rulers to perform so as to satisfy their demands. For example, Russia's strong economic performance from 2000 up until the global financial crisis of 2008 was a central source for legitimating Putin's rule (Brusis 2015).

There is some disagreement as to whether performance legitimacy really should be called legitimacy (Hechter 2009; von Soest and Grauvogel 2017). From Weber's perspective, legitimacy entails more than obedience on the basis of material or coercive incentives or sanctions: loyalty may be simulated by individuals or by whole groups on purely opportunistic grounds or granted for reasons of material self-interest. Because securing compliance to authority is contingent on material rewards, critics see distinctions between obedience on that basis and on the basis of legitimacy (Bernhard 1993; Gerschewski 2013). This criticism does not however take issue with the idea that poor government performance can weaken legitimacy (Lipset 1959); only that it cannot substitute for a set of beliefs, even though it can undermine it. Acknowledging that it may be more volatile than other dimensions of legitimacy, I follow Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2017) and consider performance-based legitimacy as a means of establishing a reciprocal social contract, as described in the rentier state-literature (e.g., Skocpol 1982), and include it as a dimension of legitimacy in the conceptualization of legitimacy as congruence.

Beetham (1991) has formulated an influential critique of Weber's typology of legitimate rule, arguing that Weber collapsed several dimensions into one typology, thereby overloading it. Instead, he proposes to keep separate at least three dimensions: legality, justifiability, and the explicit expression of consent. While views of legality refers to the idea that the regime has come to power and exercises authority in accordance with the citizens' perception of the rules, legality alone may be insufficient when citizens evaluate the regime from a moral perspective (Barker 1990). The second dimension of legitimacy, views of justification, thus captures the citizens' response to the moral justifications of the regime's exercise of power and not the political system as such. Acts of consent, on the other hand, concerns actions that express citizens' recognition of the regime's right to rule. Beetham argues that legitimacy needs to be explicitly conferred, be it in the form of mass rallies, elections, or even swearing an oath (Beetham 1991). Later empirical work by, for example, Gilley (2006) and Power and Cyr (2009) have adopted these three dimensions in their measure of legitimacy, but this understanding of legitimacy will not feature in this dissertation. I argue that two out of the three dimensions of Beetham's conceptualization are problematic to apply in comparative work. In particular, the first dimension – legality – risks introducing a normative bias, whilst the third conflates the concept of legitimacy with its purported effects. I elaborate more on the empirical consequences of this below in the section on obstacles to measurement. To be clear, I do not utilize Beetham's view of legitimacy in my own conceptualization, but it would be remiss not to mention and review his critique.

In the literature as a whole, there is ambiguity with regards to the *types*, *dimensions*, and sometimes also *sources* of legitimacy. Going forward – in my own conceptualization – I will speak exclusively about dimensions of legitimacy. The idea behind this is that taken together these constitute overall *regime legitimacy*. No single dimension is needed for a system to be perfectly legitimate, and this is where congruence theory comes in: what matters is the match between what the regime provides and what citizens' want.

Legitimacy and its neighboring concepts

Political support and trust are two closely related concepts to legitimacy that are meant to gauge the extent to which rulers succeed in gaining acceptance from their citizens. Below I briefly delineate these two from legitimacy by identifying overlaps and differences between the concepts.

Political support is perhaps the closest rivaling concept and is used widely, particularly in the study of autocratic systems, because it does not carry the normative baggage of legitimacy as discussed in the previous section. Easton, who pioneered the work on political support, distinguished between *diffuse* and *specific* support. Diffuse support refers to "evaluations of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does" (Easton 1975, 444). It is independent of the continuous input, but refers to a "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will" that enables the ruled to tolerate outputs they do not prefer (Easton 1965, p. 273). As such, diffuse support is more long-term oriented, identity-related, and often entails either a full-fledged political ideology or traditional rule. By contrast, specific support is a

short-term evaluation of the performance of the political system, a "quid pro quo for the fulfilment of demands" (Easton 1965, p. 268). It is based on a cost-benefit calculus. If the incumbent regime delivers, people pay back with short-term support. If the regime fails to deliver, support is withheld. It is clearly closely related to legitimacy, yet the concepts do not overlap completely. Expanding on Easton's diffuse-specific divide, Norris (2011) argues that political support is broadly made up of five separate components: 1) the political community and the nation-state; 2) regime principles or values underlying the system; 3) regime performance; 4) government institutions; and 5) political actors in power. The first two are clearly within the realm of legitimacy and the third, regime performance, is subsumed under performance-based legitimacy if we accept that performance can be used to establish a reciprocal social contract between the rulers and the ruled. Feelings towards actual government institutions, such as the legislature or the police, and/or towards incumbent rulers are not part of regime legitimacy. Political support is therefore more encompassing than legitimacy. In terms of citizens' beliefs, the concept can more precisely be delineated from legitimacy in that one may support a regime for a great many different reasons, ideological convictions or out of an individual cost-benefit calculation, for example, whereas legitimacy necessitates a favorable belief towards the regime, but not necessarily the ruler (cf. Gerschewski 2018, p. 11). Thus, an actor holding anti-regime sentiment whilst exhibiting pro-regime behavior (for any given reason) falls under support but not legitimacy. Note that the individual cost-benefit analysis resulting in support is different from performance legitimacy, which is based on some form or reciprocal contract that the regime delivers in general, not simply of benefits to the individual actor.

Like legitimacy, political trust is a contested concept, yet Levi and Stoker (2000) suggest that at least there exists a minimal consensus on its meaning: "Trust is relational; it involves an individual making herself vulnerable to another individual, group, or institution that has the capacity to do her harm or to betray her." Trust overlaps with Norris' (2011) fourth and fifth component of political support, and to a lesser degree with the first three. Trust is thus more direct and to some extent separate from legitimacy. For example, an actor may both distrust and disapprove of an incumbent government, yet recognize and accept its right to exercise authority. Trust and support as concepts are often applied to specific institutions or actors, such as the president, the government, legislature, police, etc., and not applied to the political system as a whole. That is reserved for legitimacy. Naturally, overlap occurs with regards to trust in institutions and processes, such as elections; however trust is more closely related to the performative dimension of legitimacy and less concerned with the ideational side (Gerschewski, 2018).

Self-censorship and sensitivity bias

Self-censorship is the practice of choosing not to express ones' true opinions and beliefs in the absence of a direct impediment. Censorship, by contrast, is such an impediment and is the practice of deleting or obscuring already formulated expressions, banning the distribution of certain books or deleting social media posts, for example.

Naturally, there is a close relationship between the two concepts as self-censorship may be a product of anticipated censorship, but self-censorship can also occur without any anticipation of being censored.

Citizens can feel the need to censor expressions or statements that are socially undesirable or politically incorrect, or if they fear that their expressions can have consequences if disclosed. In survey research, questions related to, for example, income (Chung and Monroe 2003), voter turnout (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010), prejudice against ethnic or religious groups (Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997), and drug abuse or other illegal activities (Krumpal 2013) can cause the respondent to hide the truth because of concerns about their prestige, fear of social sanctioning from peers, or fear of punishment from the state. There are a variety of topics and a variety of settings where self-censorship may be an issue.

To better understand the dynamics of self-censorship and clarify when and where it may be a problem, Blair, Coppock and Moor's (2020) "Social Reference Theory of Sensitivity Bias" is useful. The theory states that we should expect sensitivity bias – i.e., that respondents self-censor – when *all* of the following are present: the respondent 1) has a social referent in mind when responding; 2) believes the referent can infer his/her response; 3) has a perception of the referent's preferred response; and 4) has a perception that failure to provide the preferred response would entail a cost (Blair, Coppock and Moor 2020). The social referent can be the interviewer, household members, neighbors and/or the state authorities, etc. The interviewer can always know the response (on direct questions), whilst the latter three referents can possibly know the response depending on proximity and functioning anonymity protection. Respondents' perception of the referent's preferred response depends on context, but we can imagine that, for example, most respondents perceive that an interviewer prefers that you do not hold racist beliefs and that the state authorities prefer that you voted in the last election and have trust in the state institutions.

Self-censorship in autocratic settings

Most pertinent to this dissertation is self-censorship induced by political fear. From the above schema it is clear that concerns about prestige and social sanctioning can induce self-censorship in surveys conducted in both democratic and autocratic regimes. Social sanctioning is after all universal. Self-censorship induced by fear of state repression is, however, of greater concern in autocratic and semi-autocratic contexts, where the perceived and real risk of repression is likely to be higher (condition 4). In this context, the social referent is the state authorities or even the enumerator (condition 1). Self-censorship is to be expected when respondents are uncertain about anonymity protection (condition 2). Respondents may, for example, fear that the authorities can access the raw data or perceive the enumerator to be an agent of the state, which clearly compromises their feeling of anonymity. Therefore, in autocratic settings, survey questions are sensitive for reasons beyond privacy and social adaption – this applies in particular to questions regarding citizens' attitudes toward and evaluation of the authorities. These are questions where the citizen likely knows what answer the state authorities prefer (condition 3).

Kuran (1997) argues that citizens living in authoritarian regimes have strong incentives to hide their true political preferences – to exercise preference falsification – in public simply to stay safe. Criticism of – or even failing to show explicit support for – the regime can provoke repercussions in the form of infringement on personal life, economic exclusion or outright physical repression. Havel (1985) describes life in communist Czechoslovakia as a society in which people control and censor themselves, creating a system in which everyone is "both a victim and a supporter" where both the rulers and the ruled are "living a lie." Schedler (2013) raises concerns about the possibility of obtaining reliable measures of regime legitimacy through representative public-opinion surveys or qualitative interviews in autocracies because of the opaque and repressive features of those regimes. Respondents subjected to autocratic rule may practice "preference falsification" to align their answers with the perceived wishes of the regime. Given that authoritarian regimes often pay close attention to what their citizens do and say in order to sanction those who challenge the official discourse (Linz 2000), there is a real risk that respondents will associate public opinion surveys with government intelligence gathering. Respondents can therefore be expected to appease the regime with their responses out of fear that failure to do so may result in repression, physical or otherwise. If there is little or no benefit for a respondent to provide a true answer, respondents should be more likely to self-censor (Corstange 2009).

However, political fear is not the only explanation as to why self-censorship may exist in the context of an autocratic regime. Explicit regime support may be the result of social desirability bias in the classic sense of conforming to what one believes to be a social norm. Potential social repercussions may prevent an individual from expressions of regime criticism if they believe that others in their social setting hold regime friendly views and will socially sanction nonconformity (Frye et al. 2017). In this sense, falsely stating regime support under authoritarian rule could be comparable to falsely reporting that one has voted in a democracy. This pathway may be particularly salient in contexts such as China where "the Mass Line" is a defining feature of ruling party ideology (Tang 2016). Stockmann, Esarey, and Zhang (2017), for example, argue that if there is bias in survey responses in China, it may not be the result of political fear but instead be due to social factors or an attempt to guess the "correct" response in order to please the enumerator. It should be noted that self-censorship caused by social desirability and that caused by fear of repression are not mutually exclusive and that both can occur simultaneously.

This dissertation makes two empirical contributions to the study of self-censorship by documenting its widespread practice in autocratic China (Robinson and Tannenberg 2019), as well as how the variation in self-censorship across 37 African countries is a function of the repressiveness of the regime (Tannenberg et al. 2021). That is, there is an autocratic bias.

Congruence theory

Eckstein (1961) first introduced the concept of congruence in the 1960's within the political cultures literature. At the core of the original theory is the assumption that political systems are stable and perform well "to the extent that their authority patterns

are congruent with the authority patterns of other units of society" (Eckstein 1997, p. 1). Authority patterns are the structures or processes by which social units are directed or governed. Social units, in turn, are all forms of social groupings in addition to the state, such as political parties, unions, interest groups, workplaces, schools, sport clubs, families etc., and all such units require some form of governance or authority pattern. The theory's complexity increases as the authority patterns are further divided among some 11 dimension (see Eckstein and Gurr 1975) and because the weight or importance of congruence of the state to a certain type of social unit depends on its "adjacency" (Eckstein 1969). The complexities notwithstanding, the gist of the theory is that political regimes thrive only when the exercise of authority matches citizens' authority beliefs. This, argues Eckstein, pertains to all regime types regardless of whether the system is autocratic or democratic: autocracies are stable and perform well when the people buy into the power of unchecked authority, and, correspondingly, democracies are stable and perform well when citizens believe that the regime should be subjected to popular control. However, the consequences of in/congruence may be asymmetrical to regime type, especially in the short term. For example, in lieu of legitimacy, more autocratic regimes can choose to rely on repression (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2005, Gerschewski 2013).

The fall of the Weimar Republic and the subsequent rise of the Third Reich is a classic example from the congruence literature, where an undemocratic public undermined the democratic republic and paved the way for authoritarian rule. Although society in post-World War I Germany was characterized by a robust and rich civil society (Berman 1997), the authority patterns of most of these social units were not congruent with democracy and, moreover, the traditional German family was a typical form of "monocracy": a social unit in which the decision of a single individual prevails (Eckstein 1969).

Existing applications

There exists a wide range of applications of congruence theory with regards to democracy and democratic performance. In two classic examples of congruence and incongruence between political cultures and political systems, Inglehart (1990) shows the congruence between democratic attitudes and democratic stability in 22 countries, and Putnam (1993) demonstrates how the cooperative tradition dominating authority patterns in northern Italy was associated with better democratic performance compared to the more hierarchical authority patterns characterizing social life in southern Italy. Related literatures have looked at the congruence between political and economic values (Dalton and Shin 2006). Another research field relying on the concept is the study of ideological congruence. These studies, typically, examine the dynamics and consequences of congruence on a left-right political scale between, for example, partisans and parties (Ibenskas and Polk 2020), parliamentarians and their constituencies (Golder and Stramski 2010), and governments and citizens (Stecker and Tausendpfund 2016).

A strict understanding of the word congruence holds that two or more objects are either congruent or they are not. This implies measures of the concept to be dichotomous. The concept originates from geometry, and in that application objects are either

of the same shape and size or they are not, there is no middle ground with regards to congruence. This is not how congruence is theorized in the social sciences. Instead we are often interested in *degrees* of congruence. That is, the distance between demand and what is supplied. For example, in order for a voter to feel represented it likely matters if her representative is just a little or a whole lot more leftist or rightist than she is. The vast majority of studies employing measures of congruence rely on the distance between the estimated position of the government, party or the legislature and the estimated position of the median voter (Golder and Lloyd 2014) or the mean voter position (Ibenskas and Polk 2020). These studies do not aggregate the individual-level of congruence; rather they first aggregate the individual-level preferences (to the position of the median voter) and then calculate the degree of congruence vis-a-vis the unit of interest, for example, the government (for an exception see Golder and Stramski 2010). This is logical when the research question is what type of electoral rules produces the highest level of ideological congruence (e.g., Golder and Lloyd 2014), particularly in democracies where the median voter is key reference point. By contrast, when we are interested in legitimacy it may be desirable to first estimate congruence at the individual level and then aggregate up the desired unit of analysis as the consequences of legitimacy is tied in to individual and group level behavior. For example, if we are interested in the relationship between legitimacy and tax compliance, or legitimacy and protest.

Figure 1 shows how this approach would produce equal estimates of legitimacy as congruence in country A and country B. In this one dimension both countries offer a claim (solid vertical line) at 0.6 and the mean appetite in this dimension is 0.5 (dotted vertical line) – albeit the distributions of appetites are very different – resulting in equally high levels of legitimacy at 0.9. This approach is useful if we are interested in what is the best a government can do given a set distribution of preferences/attitudes.[1] For example, if the research question is: which electoral system produces better ideological congruence with the electorate? By contrast, it can be misleading to aggregate appetite if the question is: in which country are we most likely to see protests, tax avoidance, etc.? In these scenarios we would expect that country A and country B differ. If we instead aggregate the congruence of each individual's estimated position and the claim, the two countries exhibit different levels of legitimacy (see figure 2).

This is exemplified by the distributions of individual level congruence in country A (mean: 0.9) and country B (mean: 0.7). This conceptualization of congruence takes into consideration the distribution of citizens' appetite and may be particularly well suited for the concept of legitimacy. However, in the preliminary operationalization presented in paper 4, I aggregated appetite by employing Claassen's (2019) method

[1] See Golder and Stramski (2010) for a discussion on the application of *absolute median citizen congruence* versus *absolute citizen congruence.*

to create smooth country-year panels, but future applications of legitimacy as congruence should involve aggregating congruence.

Figure 1: Implications for congruence when appetite is aggregated

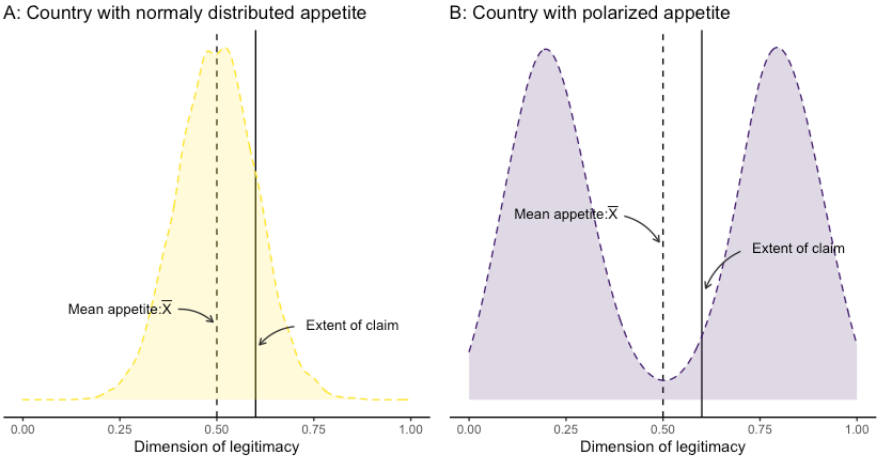
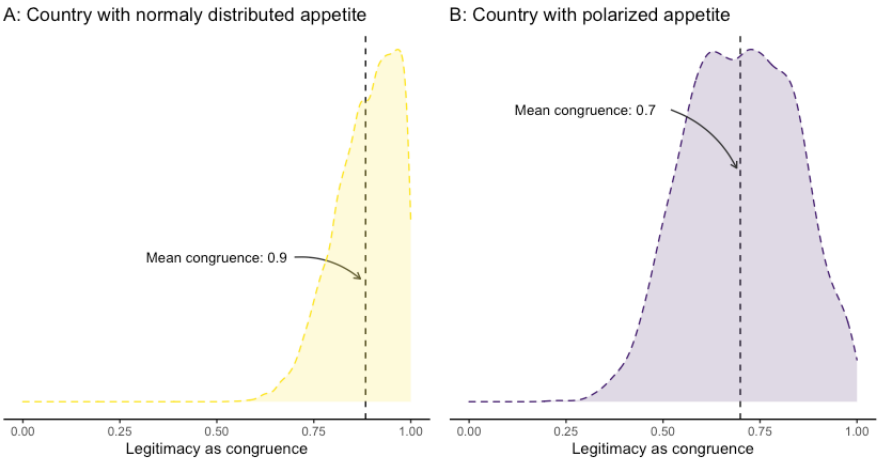


Figure 2: Implications for congruence when individual-level congruence is aggregated



Theorizing legitimacy as congruence

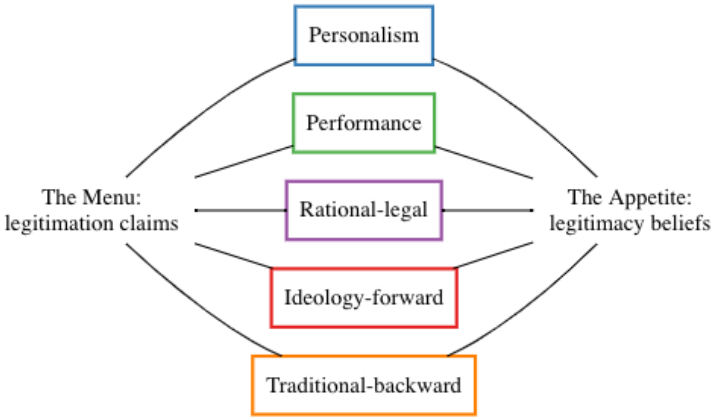
Building on Eckstein's (1961) view of congruence, I develop a conceptualization of legitimacy as the degree of congruence between five primary claims to legitimacy pursued by the rulers — their *menus of legitimation* — and the values and preferences – *the appetites* – of their citizens. My understanding of legitimacy is relational in that it includes both the actions and reactions of rulers and citizens. As such it is similar to Haldenwang's (2017) cycles of legitimation in which there is a dialogical nature between a legitimation supply and a legitimation demand cycle. By contrast, the congruence framework accepts that legitimacy can be high even in the absence of claim. Moreover, my approach is multidimensional and builds on five key dimensions of legitimacy. Conceptually, multidimensionality is not new. In fact, as documented in the previous section, most of the existing literature treats legitimacy as a multidimensional concept (Weber 1978; Gilley 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017).

Taking stock of the rich literature in the field, I expand upon Weber's original categorization of *rational-legal*, *personalism/charismatic* and *traditional* legitimacy, and distinguish between backward- and *forward-looking ideology*. I also include *performance* legitimacy as a possible dimension of legitimacy, by which rulers can base their regime on a form of reciprocal social contract. These five legitimation claims are all ideal-types. In the real world, rulers are expected to combine elements of more than one form of legitimation. Previous work has shown that rulers frequently invoke several overlapping claims that combine elements of ideal-types at the same time to justify their rule (Alagappa 1995; Burnell 2006; Von Soest and Grauvogel 2017).

The menus and appetites: Legitimation claims and legitimacy beliefs

Rulers provide a menu of justifications for their regimes, and citizens, guided by their appetite, either reject or accept some or all that is offered on the menu of legitimation.

Figure 3: The Dimensions of Legitimacy



Personalist claims are based on the extraordinary, supernatural or exceptional qualities of an individual leader. Although personalist legitimacy claims are commonplace among autocracies, the extent of these varies across time and space. This claim is not reserved for autocracies alone, rulers of democratic – or what once were – countries frequently invoke personalist claims. Duterte in the Philippines, Modi in India, Trump in the US, and Erdogan in Turkey are examples of this. A population that places greater weight on the importance of a "strong leader" will be more susceptible to attribute legitimacy to a regime pursuing this type of legitimacy.

Performance related claims of legitimacy are those that raise the regime's success in meeting the citizen's material needs. While usually focused on economic growth, low unemployment, physical security, etc., it can encompass additional dimensions depending on the values of the citizens. The central question here is whether citizens perceive rulers to be responsive to their demands. A population that places higher importance on, for example, economic development will be more likely have an appetite for the regime's success (or perceived success) in delivering that.

Evoking rational-legal legitimation claims, rulers contend that their right to rule comes from the adherence to an extensive, binding, and consistent set of laws that regulate and discipline the exercise of authority. Access to power is based on a legally established and predictable order. A population that prioritizes accountability and checks on the exercise of power will attribute more legitimacy in a system relying on rational-legal rule. Contrast this to Rothstein (2009), who argues that Quality of Government, in particular the impartial exercise of power and implementation of policy, creates political legitimacy. With congruence theory, I argue that such impartial or rational-legal rule *is* legitimacy, but only when congruent with the populations' appetite.

Ideology-based claims purport that the ruler's right to rule stems from upholding or being the custodian of some form of forward-looking ideology, be it socialism,

communism, fascism or forms of nationalism. Although nationalism in many instances is backward-looking and nostalgic, it has forward-looking aims, as opposed to the next dimension – traditional legitimacy. Citizens who ascribe to the specific type of ideology promoted by the rulers are expected to attribute legitimacy in this dimension.

Traditional, backward-looking claims center around age-old, sanctified practices and immemorial traditions. The rulers are appointed on the basis of established customs (primogeniture or the election by small council) and obeyed on the basis of this status. Obedience is usually based on a common socialization that stresses the importance of customary practices and adherence to them. Historical accounts and foundational myths are important sources of legitimacy in the present and can include claims of a natural hereditary rule (Burnell 2006). While absent in Weber's notion of traditional rule, religious claims are closely related. They too play up immemorial and not-to-be-questioned traditions, and often overlap with classical traditional claims. For example, by claiming descent from the Prophet both the Jordanian and Moroccan royal families legitimate their rule through tradition and religion (Yom and Gause 2012). To add luster to this heritage, the King of Morocco also holds the legitimizing title of Commander of the Faithful (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2017). Citizens who place a greater affinity towards traditional and religious authorities will consider systems relying on such claims as more legitimate.

Situating these five dimensions of legitimacy within Easton's framework, performance and charismatic/leader-based legitimacy correspond well to specific popular support. These require some form of continued application and are by nature more volatile due to, for example, economic up- and downturns and – hard to downplay – events such as serious illness or even the death of the leader. At the extreme end of cultivating the leaders' persona, alongside additional strategies, we find the legitimation efforts of the Kim dynasty in North Korea, which propagates the amazing-to-absurd achievements of its leaders. This strategy of claiming legitimacy has endured two leadership transitions in North Korea, but in general it can be expected to be particularly vulnerable to change, such as the unexpected death of the dictator. While the iconization of Putin's leadership in Russia began during his second presidential term, the efforts to legitimate the regime through his persona increased considerably in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis (Holmes 2010).

By contrast, rational-legal, ideological, and traditional legitimacy fit well under diffuse support. The justification for the right to rule is more ideational and less susceptible to factors outside of the rulers' control. Rational-legal legitimacy of course also requires continued application, such as regular elections, legislative procedures, etc., but in in contrast to performance legitimacy it is claimed on rule-bound application, and the key difference is that it is independent of its outcome. It is thus not dependent on uncontrollable factors.

Congruence: Appetite for the menu

I conceptualize legitimacy as congruence in the following way. Regime legitimacy is the sum of congruence in each of the five dimensions discussed above. We can think

of this as rulers operating set menu-restaurants. The extent to which citizens have an appetite for what is being served determines satisfaction. The better the menu matches the appetite, the higher the legitimacy. To some extent the items on the menu are compensatory: a terrific main course may forgive a bland starter, but it is more satisfying if both are terrific. It is also important to note that no one dimension is necessarily needed for a system to be perfectly legitimate. Some people do not want dessert, and its absence from the menu is then acceptable or even preferable. That is the core of congruence theory. Ultimately what matters is the match between the regimes' menu of legitimation and citizens' appetite.

I start by estimating congruence in each dimension. The theoretically highest possible value of legitimacy in each dimension is 1. From this, the degree of *incongruence* is subtracted. That is, the distance between what citizens want and what the regime provides. Incongruence is simply the absolute value of the menu *minus* the appetite. Thus, when fully congruent the menu and appetite cancel out, indicating full legitimacy in that dimension. Overall regime legitimacy is simply the additive sum of congruence in each dimension. From this it follows that a regime can enjoy relatively high levels of legitimacy even when being fully incongruent in one dimension, as long as a better balance is struck between menu and appetite in the remaining dimensions.

Importantly, countries can achieve equally high (or low) levels of legitimacy in the same dimension by pursuing completely different strategies. In other words, my conceptualization of legitimacy is truly relational, both in terms of conceptualization and measurement. This is crucial for avoiding the problem of normative bias discussed in the previous section. This becomes clear when thinking about the rational-legal dimension, a dimension that with a non-relational measure often suffers from a normative bias. By accepting that a regime can be fully legitimate by both relying completely on rational-legal legitimation claims or by disregarding such claims completely, my conceptualization of legitimacy is agnostic towards regime type. The task of bestowing legitimacy is left to the citizens, in relation to what is being offered.

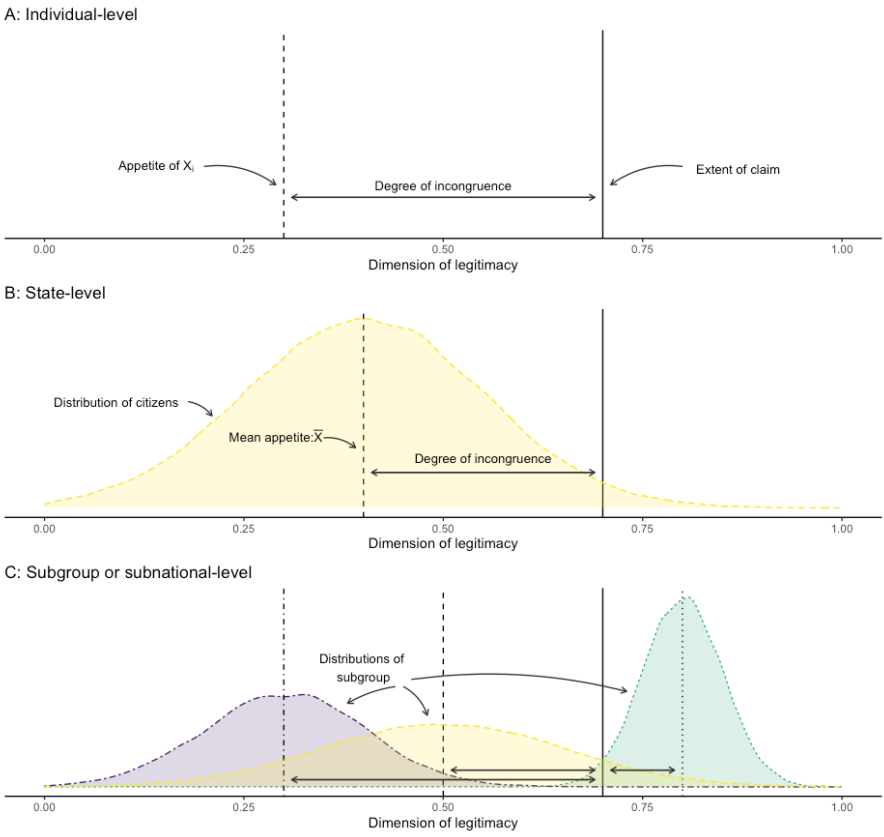
Legitimacy at different levels

In the initial operationalization used in paper 4, I estimated legitimacy at the country-year level, but we can further think of legitimacy as congruence at various levels.
At: A) the individual-level – to what extent is the menu provided congruent with an individual's appetite?; B) The state-level – to what extent is the menu provided congruent with the mean appetite of the citizens?; C) the subgroup-level – to what extent is the menu provided congruent with the mean appetite of subgroups? These subgroups can be based on demographic divides: if we are interested in the legitimacy of the regime, say amongst women versus men or older versus younger generations. Alternatively, the subgroups may be based on geographic and/or administrative boundaries if we, for example, want to contrast the regime's legitimacy among rural and urban citizens or between subnational units.

In Figure 4, I visualize how to conceptualize congruence within one single dimension of legitimacy at these different levels. At the individual level, panel A, congruence is simple. The shorter the absolute distance between the individual's appetite X_i to the regime's legitimation claim in this dimension, the higher the congruence. For

any one given citizen, this conceptualization of congruence is important and is useful when we are interested in individual-level relationships. From the point of view of the rulers, it is superfluous as they worry about the congruence with either the whole population (B) or certain subsets (C). In paper 4 it is legitimacy as depicted in panel B that is estimated.

Figure 4: Conceptualizing legitimacy as congruence at different levels



4 Measuring legitimacy

In this section, I first discuss the key issues with measuring latent concepts such as legitimacy, and proceed by reviewing existing approaches to measuring legitimacy, outlining their weaknesses and suggesting how we can improve and move beyond these measures.

Existing approaches to measuring legitimacy

There have been two distinct traditions in measuring the level of legitimacy of political systems, which Weatherford (1992) calls "the view from above" and "the view from the grassroots." The first presumes that an outside observer "relying on fairly gross aggregate evidence" can assign a comparable metric to the legitimacy of a system (Weatherford 1992, p. 150). The second has largely come to replace the view from above and instead relies on citizens' evaluation of the legitimacy of their system, that is, the citizen-side. These measures of legitimacy come in all forms, ranging from single survey items (Kwak, San Miguel, and Carreon 2012), to an aggregated set of related survey items (Doyle 2011; Fisk and Cherney 2017), and a combination of some ten survey and behavioral indicators (Gilley 2006; Booth and Seligson 2009).

The majority of existing work uses survey items probing for respondents' trust in one or several of the following to infer respondents' legitimacy beliefs: the government, the president, the parliament, political parties, the police, the judiciary, tax authorities (Booth and Seligson 2009; Power and Cyr 2009; Moehler 2009; Gilley 2006; Doyle 2011; Fisk and Cherney 2017; Ji and Jiang 2020). One concern with employing indicators of trust as proxy measures for legitimacy is that trust may mean different things in different regimes. In particular, there is a risk that it reflects satisfaction with the incumbent government instead of support for the regime. This is more likely to be the case in democracies, whereas in autocratic countries trust is more likely to be an indicator of regime support (Ji and Jiang 2020). If true, employing such measures in comparative work suffers from construct bias and would then – in Easton's (1965) terms – result in comparing specific support in democracies with diffuse support in autocracies. Satisfaction with democracy is yet another dimension that is often used as a measure of regime legitimacy (Chu et al. 2008; Gilley 2006; Booth and Seligson 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Linde 2012). While a reasonable proxy in truly democratic settings, it does not allow for the concept of legitimacy to travel into the realm of autocracies.

Others have used questions related to the perceived right of state institutions to make binding decisions and make people obey the law, either exclusively (Levi,

Sacks, and Tyler 2009) or in combination with other items (Gilley 2006; Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Power and Cyr 2009). Yet another approach to measuring legitimacy stems from Beetham's (1991) conceptualization, in which explicit acts of consent constitute one dimension. A number of behavioral indicators have been used to gauge expressions of consent (or lack thereof), such as voter turnout (Doyle 2011), tax payments, violent protests (Gilley 2006), as well as cooperation in an experimental setting (Dickson, Gordon, and Huber 2015). In other words, there exists a great many ways of operationalizing legitimacy on the appetite side, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. In the next section I describe why neither, nor a combination of, these approaches are suitable for comparative research when we are interested in more than one regime type.

Measurement equivalence and obstacles to measurement

Legitimacy is a latent variable, meaning that it is not something that we can measure directly; rather we infer it from variables that tap into the latent concept. Examples of latent concepts employed in cross-national comparative research are political support, political trust, ideological position, support for democracy, etc. Typically, these are estimated using individual-level survey items tapping into the concept. A key assumption for this to work is that responses are comparable when the same question is asked in different countries (Marien 2017). Yet, it is possible that differences in scores (of any one concept) between respondents are the result of country-specific systematic measurement errors rather than being reflective of actual differences between respondents (Stegmueller 2011). To avoid this, that is to achieve measurement equivalence, respondents that come from different groups and that share the same position on the latent trait being measured need to provide similar responses (Mellenbergh 1989). All the aforementioned latent concepts share common challenges of measurement equivalence for measuring the respective concept. Construct bias occurs when the theoretical concept of interest has a different meaning across groups, effectively resulting in comparisons of apples and oranges (Stegmueller 2011). As discussed above, it is likely the case that trust-based measures risk comparing support for incumbent government in democracies with support for the regime in autocracies.

Next, method bias can invalidate comparisons due to the different methods used, for example different sampling procedures and differences in the administration of the survey (Davidov et al. 2014). Another potential bias operates at the item level: item bias can occur due to translation errors and cultural differences in the interpretation of certain words. In contrast to construct bias, it is not differences in the understanding of the concept, but rather that the cultural meaning of the words included in the question may cause bias.

Another common problem at the item-level is differential item functioning, which can occur if scales are perceived differently in different contexts (King et al. 2004). This occurs, for example, if citizens in different countries indicate different levels on a trust scale despite in fact holding identical levels of political trust, or when they place themselves at the same point on the scale, despite different levels of trust. Most large-scale survey projects go to great lengths to ensure comparability, for example by harmonizing sampling procedures, employing well trained enumerators, using

back-translations (Davidov et al. 2014), using anchors for the response scales, and anchoring vignettes (King et al. 2004), yet threats to comparability may still persist. I circumvent, or at least minimize these issues, by employing the dynamic Bayesian latent variable model proposed by Claassen (2019), which, for example, includes parameters that adjust for the bias induced by item non-equivalence (see paper 4 for model details).

In addition to the aforementioned obstacles, existing attempts at creating measures of legitimacy that are comparable across regimes are plagued by three distinct forms of bias already discussed in brief in the introduction: *normative*, *behavioral* and *self-censorship* induced bias. In addition to these obstacles, the concept of legitimacy and measures of it often suffer from two crucial discrepancies. First, legitimacy is conceptually thought of as *relational*, but empirically it is not treated as such. Second, the *multidimensionality* of the concept is often reduced to unidimensional measures. Here I am going to outline the implications of these biases and misconceptions in more detail and suggest how to advance the measurement of legitimacy.

A normative bias is introduced into the concept and the measurement of legitimacy when the researcher prioritizes a certain ideology and mode of governance over others, often that of liberal democracy. This is not necessarily wrong and certainly not surprising, legitimacy as a concept has a strong tradition within normative political philosophy. Legitimacy is understood as the *rightness* of a regime's claim to rule as assessed from a normative standpoint, often from that of established liberal democracies. From this perspective, a legitimate autocracy becomes an oxymoron (Gerschewski 2018). The key problem with a normative conceptualization of legitimacy is agreeing upon the reference point of what should constitute a legitimate system and exercise of power. This is exemplified by Weber (1978), who challenged the view that democratic procedure is a necessary condition for legitimacy, and proposed that a legitimate regime could instead or also be established through rational and predictable laws and shared customs and culture. Following Weber's reasoning, employing a universal measure of what is normatively legitimate, and what is not, is blind to variation in citizens' views of what constitutes normatively appropriate political systems and processes. Liberal democracy might be appealing, but a normative approach distorts research of public support and legitimacy in autocracies as it overlooks that authoritarian regimes can enjoy popular support among either a broad range or subsets of the population (Burnell 2006), and that this variation is not simply explained by levels of political liberalization (Nathan 2003). This normative bias is introduced into measures of legitimacy that includes, for example, citizens' evaluations of "how well democracy is functioning in their society." Typically, but not always, this biases measures of legitimacy in favor of democratic regimes. My conceptualization of legitimacy as congruence is therefore void of normative benchmarks and is deliberately agnostic towards regime type.

Behavioral bias on the other hand is induced by the inclusion of various acts of consent in the understanding of legitimacy. Previous research has included a set of behavioral indicators to inform levels of legitimacy, such as election turnout rates, tax compliance, protests and crime levels (Gilley 2009; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Power and Cyr 2009). This leads to a number of problems if we are interested in

making comparisons between regimes and across time and space. The first issue at hand is that including acts of consent conflates *regime legitimacy* with the (expected) effects of having a *legitimate regime*. These definitions produce a problem of empirical equivalence, as acts of consent can be driven by the system's capacity to monitor and sanction non-compliance, instead of the regime's level of legitimacy. For example, if we see high tax compliance, we cannot know if we are observing high legitimacy or high state capacity, or both. Similarly, the absence of mass protests can reflect regimes' repressive capabilities rather than citizens' acquiescence (Grauvogel and von Soest 2014). Second, the meaning of these acts may also be context dependent. For example, while demonstrations and protests are often viewed as a positive feature of democracies, in autocracies their occurrence are seen as an indication of legitimacy problems (Haldenwang 2017). Because of this, behavioral measures do not feature in my measure of legitimacy. It is not possible to impute "willing obedience" from action – especially not in autocratic countries.

Self-censorship induced bias plagues opinion-based measures. As most conceptualizations of empirical legitimacy are built on citizen beliefs, so as to determine whether or not the regime is legitimate, operationalization relies on public opinion data. Typically, such data is obtained from direct survey questions regarding trust in, or support for the government, the national leadership, or various state institutions (e.g., Gilley 2009; Booth and Seligson 2009). Given the theoretical work of Kuran (1997) on "preference falsification" discussed above, we should be wary that these questions are sensitive and may provoke respondents to misrepresent their true preferences. Existing empirical findings on self-censorship are somewhat mixed (see Frye et al. 2017; Shen and Truex 2020; Lei and Lu 2017; Tang 2016), but a growing body of literature shows self-censorship to be problematic for measuring public opinion in autocracies (Jiang and Yang 2016; Kalinin 2016). To evaluate the potential threat to measures of legitimacy, the existence and degree of self-censorship needs to be empirically established across regimes.

A large part of my contribution concerns precisely this. In papers 2 and 3 of this dissertation I show that self-censorship is a major obstacle to comparing public opinion across regime types and suggest how we can account for it. It is important, to the extent it is possible, to stay clear of the indicators most prone to self-censorship bias, such as trust in the executive and support for the ruling party (see Robinson and Tannenberg 2019; and Tannenberg 2021).

In addition to these three forms of bias, the measures in the existing literature often suffer from two mismatches between the concept of legitimacy and its operationalization. First, as outlined earlier, the majority of the literature treats legitimacy as a multidimensional concept (Easton 1965; Gilley 2009; Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017). Yet, as Booth and Seligson (2009 p.10-11) note, most researchers nevertheless rely on unidimensional measures. I not only conceptualize legitimacy as congruence as multi-dimensional but also measure it in each dimension. Second, most accounts of empirical legitimacy are conceptually relational but existing approaches to operationalization are not. They almost exclusively focus on the legitimacy belief of citizens – their appetites – and leave static the regime side. It is important to take both the regime and the citizen side into account to understand

the legitimacy of a system. In the conceptualization and operationalization of legitimacy as congruence I therefore allow for both sides to be variable.

Separating legitimacy claims and legitimacy beliefs

It is evident from the review of approaches to measuring legitimacy that the dominant focus has been on legitimacy beliefs. This is, of course, only one side of the relational concept of legitimacy. With reference to the study of autocratic legitimacy, Dukalskis and Gerschewski (2017) have argued for the value of separating legitimacy claims and beliefs as a way to move the research field forward. A focus on rulers' legitimation claims allows us to move past the methodological challenges facing the measurement of legitimacy belief discussed above. They are, by their nature, designed to be known. Determining claims can, for example, be done through quantitative and/or qualitative text analysis and expert surveys (for a discussion see Gerschewski 2018), such measures will offer additional insight into the influence of legitimacy, particularly in autocratic regimes.

There are theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that legitimacy claims will fundamentally shape a regime's means of rule and as such its stability and other features. First, the sources of legitimation influence the structures of domination and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (Alagappa 1995), which is informative of its resilience to various challenges. For example, Schlumberger (2010) shows how the absolute monarchies in the Middle East use legitimacy claims based on religion to disarm Islamic opposition movements, and Grauvogel and von Soest (2014) show that the effect of international sanctions depends on the legitimation strategies of the regime that is targeted with sanctions. Kailitz and Stockemer (2017) show that autocracies that employ legitimation claims that tie the destiny of the ruling elite to the survival of the regime are the most durable of autocratic regimes.

Data on legitimation claims has largely been limited to case-studies of a single or few countries (e.g., Schlumberger 2010 and Holbig 2013). Kailitz (2013) provides a typology of autocratic regimes based on their dominant legitimation claim, but this does not allow for the investigation of regimes that depend on more than one dimension of legitimacy. Moving into the multi-dimensional space, Grauvogel and von Soest (2014) base their analysis on an innovative expert survey of legitimation claims, but it is limited to autocracies alone and to one regime spell, which does not allow for claims to change over time. Despite a recent upsurge in research on legitimacy, we did not previously have in-depth empirical explorations of how governments invoke different legitimacy claims over time. In particular, the lack of cross-sectional and longitudinal data on legitimation claims that cuts across the democracy-autocracy divide has prohibited progress in this field. A key contribution of this dissertation is the creation of a measure of regime legitimation claims for 183 countries in the world from 1900 to 2019. This endeavor is described in brief in the next section and in detail in paper 1.

Measuring the menus: Legitimation claims

To operationalize the menu of legitimation, I utilize data presented in paper 1, in which I and co-authors developed a question battery of legitimation claims that asked country experts to rate the extent to which the government promotes or references the person of the leader, rational-legal procedures, its performance, and ideology in order to justify the regime in place. Additionally, following the item on ideology, the experts were asked to categorize its nature as nationalist, communist/socialist, conservative/restorative, religious, and/or separatist. The approach of subsuming several forms of legitimation claims under ideology was necessitated by the number of questions allocated for the project. While making these claims somewhat narrower in scope than the literature deserves, this approach allows for empirical investigation of a greater set of claims than would otherwise have been possible.

One might note the absence of liberalism as a potential ideology through which rulers may seek to justify their regime. This is because liberalism is largely captured by the question on rational-legal legitimation. Liberal arguments justifying rule are based on procedural rationales. One can also think of liberalism as being the excluded, residual category, in the question on ideology, which means that our question regarding ideology is really a measure of illiberal ideology. The last item is used to code the forward-looking claims, based on nationalist and communist/socialist as ideology based. The backward-looking claims focusing on Religion and Restorative/Conservative make up traditional rule (see table 3). We then measure the extent to which governments utilize these legitimation strategies for their respective regimes using V-Dem's expert coding methods for generating latent variables (Marquardt and Pemstein 2018; Coppedge et al. 2019).

In the instructions to the experts, we clarified that the *government* is understood as the chief executive along with the cabinet, ministries, and top civil servants, and that the *regime* is understood as a set of formal and/or informal rules that govern the choice of political leaders and their exercise of power. Further, we stressed that coders should not assume that governments only make legitimacy claims on one basis (although that can be the case), and that we are interested in capturing multi-track and combinations of legitimation strategies.

Measuring the appetites: Legitimacy beliefs

With the measures for the regime-side of the congruence equation in place, the next step is finding the corresponding puzzle pieces of citizens' appetite. In principle any type of data that capture citizens' appetite for each of the five dimensions can be used to create indices. In practice it is likely to be data derived from representative surveys. To measure appetite, I make use of existing public opinion data from nine major cross-national survey projects.[2] I gather *all* items tapping into appetite for the different dimensions of legitimacy. This global dataset on appetite contains data from 2,183,798 respondents, nested within 1,662 nationally representative surveys, fielded across 136 countries, between 1981 and 2029. It is global in scope and spans 40 years.

[2] The Afrobarometer; the Arabbaromer; the Asianbarometer; the Latin American Public Opinion Project; the Latinobarometer; Pew Research Center; the European Values Survey; and the World Values Survey.

The main challenge in creating measures of appetite that are comparative on a global scale, is to reconcile the wide range of disparate survey items tapping into appetite in each dimension. Differences in sample sizes, response scales, question wording, geographical and temporal coverage make this a formidable task. In order to consolidate these diverse data, I follow Claassen's (2019) approach to modelling appetite as a latent trait by estimating a dynamic Bayesian latent trait model to construct smoothed country-year panels. The IRT model developed in Claassen's (2019) study has successfully been used to estimate democratic mood (Claassen 2020b), support for democracy (Claassen 2020a), and political trust (Ji and Jiang 2020) globally and attitudes towards immigration within Europe (Claassen and McLaren 2021), using data that is fragmented over space, time and survey items. The advantage of the IRT approach is that in contrast to traditional approaches of combining survey items from different sources, which requires semantic equivalence between question items used to aggregate opinion, the IRT approach does not. This is crucial for estimating appetite for the five dimensions of legitimacy as there are not enough survey items that are plausibly equivalent when moving from one well-harmonized barometer-project up to a global scale. Furthermore, even identical survey items may suffer from measurement non-equivalence (Stegmueller 2011), i.e., have different effects in different countries. The dynamic Bayesian latent variable model includes parameters that adjust for the bias induced by item non-equivalence. For this to work, items must be employed more than once per country.

Relying on less sensitive survey items

Papers 2 and 3 stress the need to employ survey items that do not suffer from systematic bias due to regime type. As a guiding principle, I use items where the answer options do not force respondents to reveal their support or otherwise for the regime. To take an example, a respondent may choose between the following two statements:

(1) "Since the President was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong."
(2) "The President must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong."

A respondent can plausibly choose either and still be a supporter or non-supporter of the regime. By contrast, choosing between having *trust* or *not having trust* in the President or the ruling party does not offer the respondent any opportunity to retain ambiguity regarding regime support. I evaluated the sensitivity of the appetite items by utilizing the research design from paper 3 to compare the sensitivity of each item available in Afrobarometer data rounds 2 to 8.[3] In contrast to the items used in previous research to measure legitimacy, the appetite items I employ are considerably less sensitive, if at all (see paper 4 for details).

Appetite across the world

The face validity of the appetite estimates is generally good. Appetite for personalism is high in countries such as the Philippines, Russia, Brazil, etc. where we have

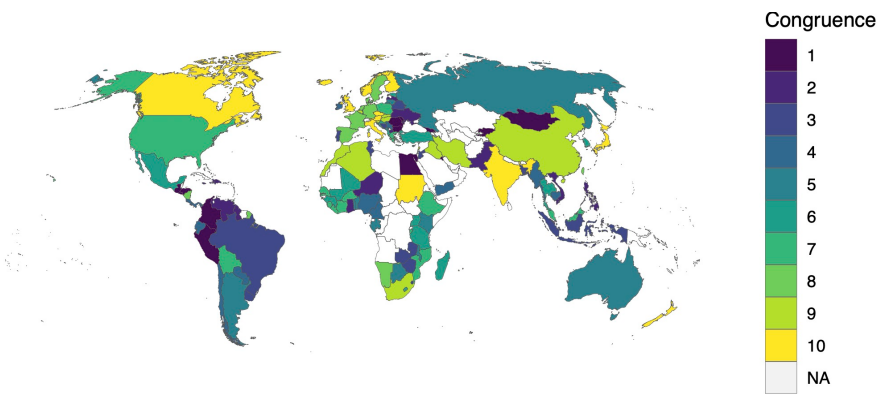
[3] The other survey projects do not include information on perceived survey sponsor and hence does not allow for a test of autocratic bias.

also seen a rise in legitimation claims based on the person of the ruler. Appetite for performance is particularly high in southern and eastern Europe in countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Russia, as well as in North Africa and South East Asia. Appetite for rational-legal rule is high where we would expect it to be: in northern and western Europe, Australia, Canada, etc. On the African continent, it is particularly high in democratic Ghana, Botswana, Mauritius and the Ivory Coast. A comparatively low appetite for rational-legal rule is noted in Russia, Ukraine, Brazil, Mexico and throughout North Africa and the Middle East, with the exception of Tunisia and Morocco, where appetite is somewhat higher. Appetite for communist or socialist rule is high in most of the countries we would expect, such as China, Vietnam and Mozambique, and is comparatively high throughout Latin America. Lastly, appetite for religious-based rule is highest in Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia, and comparatively high throughout Africa, Central America and South East Asia. See paper 4, Figure 3, for details.

Legitimacy across the world

Figure 5 maps the average combined congruence between 2015 and 2020 for the 122 countries for which I have observations in all dimensions, with values divided into deciles. With some exceptions, the face validity is generally good. In the top three deciles we find many of the liberal democracies often thought to enjoy high legitimacy, such as Germany, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, etc., as well as often cited as highly legitimate autocracies such as China (Holbig and Gilley 2010).

Figure 5: Average congruence around the world 2015 to 2020



Of course, no objective yardstick to which the measure can be compared exists, but the inclusion of Sudan, Algeria and Iraq in the top deciles stand out as a challenge to the validity of the measure given the developments in these countries during the time period, which includes coups, mass protest and war. The compounding effects of measurement error or even the estimation of average estimates (hiding polarized appetite) may lead to these unexpected values. Another explanation is that the measure

comes from a different time and that there are changes prior to the said events that may not have been accounted for. It may also be that while legitimacy should be expected to strengthen states in general, it does not guarantee insulation against unrest. Among the least legitimate countries we find countries such as Bulgaria, Egypt, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Pakistan, as well as several of the Central American and Caribbean states, such as Honduras, El Salvador and Haiti.

Overall, the face validity of congruence in the five dimensions is good, albeit there are some problems with the measures, which is discussed in the limitations section and in detail in paper 4. Despite these, I show that the measure is empirically useful and that it has the expected relationships with the key outcomes that the classical literature would suggest. I show this by employing the measure of legitimacy as congruence in an empirical application to predict political stability and repression at the country-year level. I also compare the proposed measure to existing approaches and show how legitimacy as congruence differs from measures building on political trust. While the measures are positively correlated, with many of the countries in the top deciles of legitimacy also displaying high levels of political trust, there are several important differences. It is notable that a large share of the world's liberal democracies, such as Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Canada, Italy, Austria, etc., score considerably higher on legitimacy as congruence than on the trust-based measure. Certainly, these are countries most observers would assume to be legitimate. Given that it is possible to neither trust nor support an incumbent or an institution and at the same time recognize their right to exercise authority (i.e., view them as legitimate) this should perhaps not be surprising. Furthermore, many closed and electoral autocracies with a capacity for political repression score unexpectedly high on the trust-based measure. Here we find China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, etc. This is consistent with the findings from paper 2 and paper 3, which show trust and confidence indicators to suffer from an autocratic bias (Robinson and Tannenberg 2019; Tannenberg 2021).

5 The Papers in brief

This section includes brief summaries of the four independent papers that constitute this compilation dissertation. The full papers, in their original journal formatting, follow in subsequent order after this introductory chapter.

1 - Claiming the right to rule: Regime legitimation strategies, 1900 to 2019

The first paper of the dissertation addresses the regime-side of the congruence equation: the regimes' menu of legitimation. Together with my co-authors,[4] we describe the concept of *legitimation claims*, in contrast to legitimacy, and design a strategy for measuring these across time and space. Governments consistently make claims that provide justification for why they are entitled to rule. These claims aim to legitimate the rules, both formal and informal, on who holds authority, how they can exercise it, and to what ends, thereby empowering rulers to exercise authority. Legitimation strategies are not "cheap talk" but have fundamental political consequences. Different claims to legitimacy have ramifications for how a country functions (Burnell 2006), as well as the nature of the relationship between the rulers and ruled (Weber [1922] 1978).

In the literature on democratic rule, the creation and maintenance of legitimacy – often procedural – is widely discussed and well-established (Lipset 1959; Linz 1978; Almond and Verba 1963). Despite a largely European research tradition on the legitimation strategies of authoritarian regimes (Bernhard 1993; Gill 1982; Lane 1984; Pakulski 1986; Pye 1971; Rigby and Fehér 1982), a recent turn in the study of authoritarianism has focused on institutional factors and their material and distributive consequences, and has thereby overlooked the effects of different legitimation strategies on citizen-state relations. Despite a recent upsurge in research on legitimacy, also in relation to authoritarian regimes (von Soest and Grauvogel 2017; Gerschewski 2018), and populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018), we still lack in-depth empirical explorations of how governments invoke different claims of legitimacy and how this mode of rule relates to others such as co-optation, repression or the provision of public goods (Gerschewski 2013). In particular, the lack of cross-sectional and longitudinal data on legitimation strategies that cuts across the democracy-autocracy divide hampers scholarly advancement. Existing studies of political legitimacy overwhelmingly

[4] Tannenberg, M., Bernhard, M., Gerschewski, J., Lührmann, A., & von Soest, C. (2020). Claiming the Right to Rule: Regime Legitimation Strategies, 1900 to 2019. European Political Science Review.

address democracies (e.g., Almond and Verba 1989; Kaase and Newton 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Booth and Seligson 2009; Schneider et al. 2010) and, occasionally, autocracies (Kailitz 2013).

The paper addresses this gap with a data collection effort that differs from past approaches in two important ways. First, it comparatively assesses the legitimation strategies of both democracies and autocracies in an integrated framework. Second, most studies focus on whether citizens accept the legitimation claims of their rulers, i.e., only the appetite. By contrast, in this paper the focus is on the legitimacy claims offered by those in power, that is the strategies that rulers use to seek legitimacy rather than legitimacy itself. Building on the rich tradition of theory in comparative politics and political sociology, we distinguish four legitimation strategies: (1) ideological (2) personalistic (3) rational-legal (procedural) and (4) performance-based. We then measure the extent to which governments utilize these legitimation strategies for their respective regimes using V-Dem's expert survey coding methods for generating latent variables for 183 countries from 1900 to 2019. The V-Dem measurement model ensures that the latent variables generated by the aggregation of the expert-coding are highly comparable across time and space. Country experts rated the extent to which the government promotes or references its performance, the person of the leader, rational-legal procedures and ideology in order to justify the regime in place. Additionally, the item on ideology asked the experts to further categorize its nature as nationalist, communist/socialist, conservative/restorative, religious, and/or separatist. For the purpose of this dissertation, I only treat nationalist, communist and socialist claims as being ideology-based. Conservative, restorative and religious claims fall under traditional rule in the Weberian sense.

The paper discusses the varieties of legitimation strategies and how the experts coded them. The data is then subjected to validation procedures along the lines suggested by Adcock and Collier (2001); examining the convergent, content (face), and construct (nomological) validity of the measures. The construct validity test evaluates the performance of the person of the leader indicator in assessing well-established hypotheses – the reliance of populists on personalism and charismatic appeals. This dataset is not only useful for researchers interested in conducting cross-national studies on legitimation claims but also for those looking to locate their case studies within an almost complete universe of legitimation claims made by autocratic and democratic rulers. For the purpose of this dissertation it is essential and provides the regimes' *Menus of Legitimation*. I want to highlight that while the published paper is based on estimates of legitimation claims up until 2019, the most recent release of the V-Dem data set (v.12) includes additional data on claims for 2020 and 2021, and hopefully future updates will expand the legitimation data even further.

2 - Self-censorship in authoritarian states: Evidence from list experiments in China

In the second paper of the dissertation,[5] I address the citizen-side of the congruence equation: *the appetite*. To create a measure of legitimacy, there is no way around using the opinions and preferences of the population that grants a regime its legitimacy. Yet, as discussed throughout this chapter, such measures are likely to suffer from systematic bias. This paper provides a strong experimental test of the influence of self-censorship on measures of regime support in the setting of China, a highly autocratic country that is also often accredited with high levels of legitimacy (see Tang 2016 and Dickson et al. 2016). A common explanation as to why the Chinese Communist Party has managed to maintain power is that the party has successfully cultivated legitimacy among its citizens as a result of effective governance and the outputs of the political system (Holbig and Gilley 2010; Wang 2005b). This has been confirmed empirically in survey research that finds consistently high levels of trust and support for the regime. In an extraordinary display of public cohesion, 94% of Chinese survey respondents reported that they had trust in the national government in the 2011 wave of the Asian Barometer. Moreover, in 2003 94% of respondents agreed with the statement, "Our form of government is best for us" (Nathan 2007), and in 2014 president Xi Jinping received the highest approval rating of 30 world leaders (Saich 2014). Compared to almost any country,[6] and certainly relative to any established democracy, these are staggering numbers.

But are these expressions of regime support reflective of sincere beliefs? Given the CCP's consolidation of the national territory and record of economic growth that has lifted people out of poverty at an unprecedented rate (UNDP 2016), and the regime's focus on good governance and the provision of public goods (Dickson et al. 2016), high support is argued to be a reflection of citizen approval (Holbig and Gilley 2010; Wang 2005b; Tang 2016). Moreover, it has been argued by some that cultural values in favor of hierarchy and the collective make the Chinese population predisposed to accept political authority uncritically (Shi 2008). It is most certainly the case that the regime enjoys some level of popular support – it is hard to imagine its survival and stability for such a long period of time without this. But there is the distinct possibility that at least part of the explanation for these extraordinary figures lies in the unwillingness of some individuals to criticize the regime. China is a one-party state with both the capacity and audacity to implement mass surveillance, use violent repression, and to forbid dissent (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013; Stockmann and Gallagher 2011). Perhaps surprising given such realities, the study of self-censorship in survey data in China has received little scholarly attention. While conference presentations often lead to discussion of the validity of survey measures precisely due to such concerns (Stockmann, Esarey, and Zhang 2017), the published literature has

[5] Robinson, D., & Tannenberg, M. (2019). Self-censorship of regime support in authoritarian states: Evidence from list experiments in China. Research & Politics, 6(3)

[6] Notable exceptions are Vietnam (AsianBarometer 2008) and Russia (Frye et al. 2017; Kalinin 2016), where Putin was the runner-up in world leaders approval ratings (Saich 2014).

tended to dismiss or ignore such issues, making the implicit assumption that expressed responses represent true beliefs.

In order to determine if self-censorship is present in measures of regime support in Chinese survey data, we conducted an online survey experiment in mainland China. We employed four list experiments to test respondents' support for four potentially politically sensitive propositions: confidence in the national government; belief in the sincerity of an ongoing anti-corruption campaign; preference for the existing system of government; and support for government censorship. The list experiment design works such that respondents' preferences with regards to a sensitive item cannot be traced to an individual while at the same time allowing for estimates of preference for the item at the aggregate level. Estimates from the list experiments are then contrasted to estimates based on direct questions to gauge the extent of self-censorship for each of the four items. Following Easton's (1975) seminal work, we differentiate between diffuse support, which pertains to the more abstract, long-standing, encompassing features of the regime such as institutions, and specific support, which reflects short-term, concrete aspects such as actors and particular policies. Our study is designed so that two sensitive items evaluate diffuse support and two items specific support.

Several recent studies have employed creative designs to estimate the extent of self-censorship in non-democratic contexts (Kalinin 2016; Frye et al. 2017; Jiang and Yang 2016; Lei and Lu 2017; Tang 2016; Stockmann, Esarey, and Zhang 2017; Chen 2017). However, while they all provide valuable contributions to the literature on self-censorship, they leave unanswered the questions as to if, and what proportion of, Chinese respondents self-censor on items of regime support in a standard survey setting. Our study contributes to this prior work through the introduction of a strong design for the measurement of self-censorship employed in a large and geographically diverse sample, with items that map onto the multidimensional features of regime support. Our findings indicate that self-censorship is in fact widespread for all four of our sensitive items and considerably higher than previously assumed. The differences between list experiment estimates and those from direct questions are significant and substantial, ranging from 24.5 to 26.5 percentage points.

This study makes a direct contribution to the literature on self-censorship and political support in China and authoritarian regimes more broadly. Specifically, studies that argue for a high degree of public support for the regime in China may be based on biased overestimates (Tang 2016; Li 2004; Wang 2005a; Zhong 2014). But beyond aggregate estimates of support, past studies that aim to determine the factors that lead to the development of support for authoritarian rule may also be biased. For example, regime support has been linked to provincial-level public good provision (Dickson et al. 2016) and individual-level income (Hutchison and Xu 2017). Yet, if self-censorship is related to the amount of resources one has access to from the government or individually – a point which we make in the paper – these results are positively biased. On the other hand, the presence of self-censorship does not immediately weaken the results, and in some cases it may give cause for optimistic interpretation. For example, in Tsai and Xu (2018), the authors find that those with political connections are not generally more satisfied with government than are those without connections. If, however, political connections lead one to self-censor to a lesser degree – which we argue

and which is supported in our findings – then the effect of political connections on satisfaction is in fact dampened by self-censorship. That is, the subgroup-level differences in self-censorship serve to negatively bias results in this instance. This discussion highlights the importance of the study of self-censorship of political support in authoritarian contexts and the contribution that this current study makes to the literature, both past and future. Understanding the extent of self-censorship should be of great scholarly interest in and of itself, but it is also necessary in order to understand and interpret findings that are derived from such biased measures of regime support.

3 - The Autocratic bias: Self-censorship of regime support

The previous paper (2), offers strong experimental evidence that self-censorship is an obstacle to accurately capturing public opinion in China. Yet, it is limited in scope, both in that it is carried out only in China and in that it focuses on four survey items. While contrasting estimates from list experiments with direct questions is an excellent design to measure the degree of self-censorship, it is inefficient and costly. To address these issues, paper 3[7] draws upon existing data from more than 228,000 respondents across 37 African countries and employs a simple design to test if, and to what extent, more than 40 commonly used survey items suffer from self-censorship.

When Zimbabweans were asked in 2018 how much they trusted their President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, on average 68% said "a lot" or "somewhat." This is considered strong approval by most accounts, but is it true? By dividing respondents into two groups we get a different picture. In the one that believes that the interviewer was sent by the government, 77% indicated trust in Mnangagwa, and in the one that does not, some 57% shared this sentiment. By contrast, in democratic Ghana the difference between these two groups of respondents was only 4 percentage points, compared to 20 points in considerably less democratic Zimbabwe. This paper asks: does autocracy bias certain survey questions?

Existing empirical evidence of self-censorship in authoritarian regimes is – as in paper 2 – primarily drawn from single country studies and their findings are mixed. A handful of studies shows self-censorship to be problematic for measuring public opinion (Jiang and Yang 2016; Kalinin 2016; Robinson and Tannenberg 2019), while others find self-censorship to be less of a concern (Frye et al. 2017) or even non-existent (Lei and Lu 2017; Tang 2016). In a recent study, Shen and Truex 2020 estimated self-censorship across a large number of countries by utilizing differences in non-response rates between sensitive and non-sensitive items. They found self-censorship to be highly variable across autocratic regimes, but concluded that it is oftentimes not an obstacle to capturing public opinion in autocratic settings. By contrast, with an approach utilizing responses (as opposed to non-responses) this article finds self-censorship to be a severe issue in most autocracies.

It is well known that respondents tend to give untruthful answers to survey questions regarding sensitive issues such as sexuality, race, or income due to social desirability bias. In autocratic countries, additional questions are sensitive for reasons beyond privacy and social adaption – in particular, questions regarding the citizens'

[7] Tannenberg, M. (2021). The Autocratic Bias: Self-censorship of Regime Support. Democratization

relationship with, and attitudes toward, the authorities. Respondents subjected to autocratic rule may practice preference falsification to align their answers with the perceived wishes of the regime (Kuran 1997). Given that authoritarian regimes often pay close attention to what their citizens do and say in order to sanction those who challenge the official discourse (Linz 2000), there is a real risk that respondents will associate public opinion surveys with government intelligence gathering. Respondents can therefore be expected to appease the regime with their responses out of fear that failure to do so may result in repression, physical or otherwise. To the extent that citizens practice self-censorship in any form, and that the prevalence of this depends on the perceived risk of repressive action, responses on sensitive issues are systematically biased across countries and are therefore not comparable between countries where the perceived risks differ.

Given that much of our current knowledge about politics and everyday life in autocratic countries is informed by public opinion surveys (Treisman 2011; Geddes and Zaller 1989; Weyland 2000), it begs the question – are we misinformed? Moreover, what we know about the effects and causes of, for example, trust in government, democratic attitudes, corruption perceptions, regime support, and political legitimacy, relies to a large extent on survey research comparing countries with varying regime types (e.g., Gilley 2006; Booth and Seligson 2009; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Magalhães 2014), where data is derived through direct questions on these (in some countries but not in others) sensitive topics. Such studies all make the assumption that survey respondents across the sampled countries are – somewhat equally – willing to express their true opinions with respect to political topics. In this paper I show that this is not the case and that bias from self-censorship does not operate uniformly across regime type.

I test the variation in levels of self-censorship in countries where respondents experience different perceived (and real) risks of repressive action by employing a simple research design that utilizes data on whether respondents think the government sent the survey enumerator to interview them or that the enumerator works for an independent research organization. I then analyze if these two groups of respondents answer systematically differently to potentially sensitive questions and whether this difference is a function of the climate of political repression. It is important to note that the propensity to think the government has sent the enumerator or not is distinctly unrelated to the levels of democracy. Drawing upon data from 228,000 respondents across 37 African countries over 6 survey rounds, the results show that there is indeed an autocratic bias. Responses to questions related to the citizen-state relationship, such as whether respondents trust the president or the ruling party, are strongly and systematically biased in line with the level of democracy in the country, while apolitical questions, such as "How much do you trust your neighbors?" are not. Caution is warranted in employing the former types of survey items, but not the latter, in comparative studies across different regime types.

4 - Legitimacy as congruence: Matching expert coded and public opinion data

In paper 4 I introduce the conceptualization of *legitimacy as congruence* across five key dimensions: personalism, performance, rational-legal, ideology, and traditional. I argue that it is only when the ruler's legitimation claim is congruent with citizens' appetite that political rule is truly legitimate. Rulers provide a menu of justifications for their right to rule based on five dimensions: personalism, performance, rational-legal, ideology, and traditional. If we think of rulers as operating set menu-restaurants, the extent to which citizens have appetite for what is being served determines satisfaction. The better the menu matches the overall appetite, the higher the legitimacy. This conceptualization is crucial for avoiding some of the issues facing existing approaches to legitimacy; for example, the problem of normative bias discussed in the measurement section. With my approach it is possible to both conceptualize and measure legitimacy in any dimension without the researcher introducing a normative benchmark. With congruence theory a regime can be fully legitimate by relying completely on, for example, rational-legal legitimation claims or by disregarding such claims completely. What matters is the relationship between the claim and the appetite of the relevant population. They alone have the right to bestow legitimacy in relation to what is being offered.

I take the insights and data from paper 1 and the lessons from papers 2 and 3 and proceed to operationalize legitimacy by matching the expert coded legitimation strategies from paper 1 with public opinion data from well over 2 million respondents drawn from seven large scale cross-national survey projects fielded in 136 countries between 1981 and 2020. With this data I use Claassen's (2019) Bayesian latent variable model to estimate smooth country-year panels of appetite for the five dimensions of legitimacy, using items that tap into preferences for personalism (a strong leader), performance, rational-legal rule, ideology, and traditional rule. To mitigate the impact of this self-censorship bias, I avoid indicators most prone to self-censorship, such as trust in the executive or the ruling party, and instead rely on survey items that allow respondents to retain ambiguity regarding her support for the incumbent rulers. After calculating congruence in all five dimensions, I use a simple additive index to create a measure of overall legitimacy.

I employ this measure in an empirical application to test the relationship between legitimacy as congruence and two key outcomes: political stability and repression. First, legitimacy should have a positive relationship with political stability: disaffected citizens are more likely to abandon within-system participation and engage in destabilizing activities in both democracies (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004) and autocracies (Burnell 2006). Second, the existing literature has strong expectations that rulers that do not enjoy "willing compliance" need more coercive and repressive measures to ensure compliance and regime stability (Beetham 1991; Alagappa 1995; Gerschewski 2013). These tests can be viewed as a validation of my approach. I show that in line with the theoretical expectations, rulers offering a menu that matches poorly with their citizens' appetite are 1) less stable and 2) use more repression to stay in power. Conversely, rulers in regimes with a better match between menu and appetite enjoy more

political stability and use less repression. Lastly, I compare the proposed measure to existing approaches to legitimacy that build on Beetham's (1991) conceptualization and to trust-based measures and show how legitimacy as congruence is robust in relation to, and how it differs from, these.

6 Limitations and ways forward

In this section I briefly discuss some of the key limitations of this dissertation and, where applicable, suggest ways to address these and move forward with future research.

Uncertainty of self-censorship

Given the private nature of self-censorship, it is a phenomenon that is particularly difficult to measure. Papers 2 and 3 use two different research designs to estimate its prevalence, yet neither is without limitations. The list experiments used in paper 2 effectively remove concerns regarding anonymity protection, in other words, it reassures the respondents that the social referent (in this case the Chinese authorities) cannot know the individual respondent's answer should they obtain the raw data. However, the list experiment does not in any way incentivize respondents to report their true preferences. If respondents do not want to report their dissatisfaction with the Chinese regime, even if doing so is completely risk-free, the design cannot pick this up. While speculative, it is possible that nationalism could affect respondents' willingness to confer regime disapproval to foreign researchers. This practice would lead to underestimates of self-censorship. A second issue pertains to the inefficiency of indirect questioning techniques. Estimates from the list experiment tend to have high variance (Blair, Coppock, and Moor 2020). This is reflected by the wide range of confidence intervals of point estimates of self-censorship, ranging between 16 to 34 percentage points (Robinson and Tannenberg 2019). Future applications of the list experiment would do well to incorporate the design suggestions that my colleague and I lay out in Agerberg and Tannenberg (2021) as well as to carefully monitor and address respondent inattention to improve estimates.

The approach to test the scope of self-censorship used in paper 3 has different limitations and assumptions that should be highlighted here. First, the design can inform us about variation in the level of self-censorship, but it does not allow estimates of the absolute level of self-censorship. Even among respondents who believe that the survey is independent, self-censorship may be taking place. Respondents may, for example, fear that the authorities can use the survey to trace unsanctioned opinions to an individual, a neighborhood, or a village. If respondents adopt a better-safe-than-sorry approach, it would reduce differences between the two groups that are used to estimate self-censorship. Bearing in mind that the absolute levels of bias cannot be established, the findings do show that between-group differences are clear and meaningful. Another potential issue is the assumption of the research design that the

suspecting respondents in autocracies and democracies do not differ on any dimensions other than those I can account for in the analysis. This would be violated if, for example, regime supporters in autocracies (but not in democracies) are more likely to believe the regime is powerful and therefore also more likely to think that the regime sponsors the survey. I cannot test this assumption, but the fact that state capacity does not exhibit a relationship with aggregated sponsorship belief offers an indication that the assumption is not violated (Tannenberg 2021). Another assumption is that respondent belief about survey sponsorship is stable throughout the survey and not formed towards the end of the survey after having answered the potentially sensitive items. Given that the question is always asked last, this assumption is not testable.

Uncertainty of legitimation claims

In paper 4 I discuss in detail the potential issue with the validity of the legitimation claims used to operationalize the menus of legitimation, but I briefly want to highlight two of these here. First, the extraordinary high reliance on the claim among liberal democracies such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Australia etc., is cause for concern. The population in liberal democracies typically displays low appetite for performance-based rule, resulting in very low congruence, which in turn impacts their overall legitimacy estimates negatively. This does not square with our expectations, so what is going on here? While it is likely true that leaders in these countries believe their regime (that is, the rules of the game and not the incumbent) is beneficial for performance, it is most likely that few of them would condition the regime on performance. That is, continued performance is not the basis of the continuation of the regime. I suspect that the expert coders in some cases have conflated the regime and the incumbent government when coding the question. In order to avoid this, we explicitly mentioned in the coding instructions that the regime is to be understood as a set of formal and informal rules that govern the choice of political leaders and their exercise of power, while the government is understood as the chief executive along with the cabinet, ministries, and top civil servants. Certainly, most incumbents in these countries claim that they should be (re)elected on the basis of their ability to deliver, which may explain the unintuitive coding in many of the countries.

In this first application of legitimacy as congruence I retain the original estimates, but future applications may consider rank-ordering claims so that a higher reliance on a claim in one dimension necessitates a lower score in the next, and yet lower in the third highest dimension, and so on. Appetite could be rank-ordered as well, and congruence would then be calculated as the fit between the lists. It would, however, come at the cost of information loss as the nuance of the continuous measure would be lost.

A second issue relates to how to approach unfulfilled claims. It is one thing for rulers to claim their "right to rule" in one dimension but it is another to actually fulfill that claim. For example, Singapore and Venezuela both rely heavily on performance-based rule, yet in the past decade it is only Singapore that seems to have delivered in this dimension (whether we think of economic development, security, etc.). It likely matters for the perception of the population if the claim is credible, but with the preliminary approach I take in paper 4 I cannot distinguish credible from non-credible

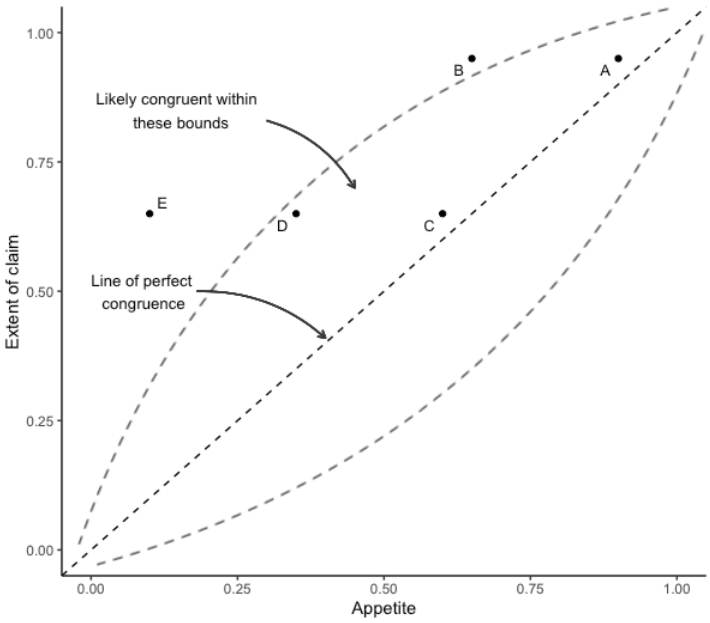
claims. These hollow claims are perhaps most notable in the performance dimension but can occur in all five dimensions. Zimbabwe provides an example of this. The country achieves high congruence in the rational-legal dimension because of a match between the populations' high appetite for procedural rule and the rulers' strong emphasis on such claims. Yet, there is a clear discrepancy between the claims and reality: Zimbabwe scores very low on measures of rule of law and electoral democracy, which indicate low actual commitment to the two sub-dimensions of rational-legal rule. A potential future solution might be to code claims in the performance dimension as non-/credible using data on economic growth in recent years, or in the rational-legal dimension through discrepancies to measures on the rule of law etc.

Uncertainty of reference points

A key challenge of studying congruence empirically is the need to estimate citizen appetites and government menus on similar scales (see Powell 2009 for a discussion focused on ideological congruence). In contrast to studies of congruence between support for and the adaption of certain policies, where it is quite clear when congruence is observed (being pro a policy that is also implemented), the approach used in paper 4 is associated with considerably more uncertainty. A limitation of the approach of combining the expert coded legitimation data with secondary individual-level survey data is that no corresponding reference points between the menu and appetite items exists. We can, of course, be quite certain at the extreme ends of each scale. For example, that respondents who indicate that they really prefer that the president decides everything have an appetite that is truly congruent when the regime is heavily justified on the person of the leader.

In figure 6, this is depicted with A: an observation that is very close to the diagonal line of perfect congruence. Legitimacy as congruence is likely higher for A than for B, who have a more moderate appetite for personalism, but as we move to the middle of the scale uncertainty increases. It is less clear that C is more congruent than is D, even though they are at equally different distances from the line of perfect congruence as A is from B. However, we should be comfortable in saying that E (who clearly have distaste for personalism) is less congruent than are C or D. Future measurement strategies of legitimacy as congruence, or similar applications of congruence, may want to explore approaches to incorporate this uncertainty into analysis.

Figure 6: Uncertainty of reference points between menu and appetite



Uncertainty around point estimates of claims and appetite

Another issue worth bringing forth is the uncertainty around the point estimates of the position on the menus and the appetites. On both sides I rely on the point estimates from the different IRT models to estimate congruence, yet these are only the mean estimates, and the models also produce credible intervals that could be utilized in future research to calculate upper and lower bounds on the degree of congruence. In this first application of legitimacy as congruence I have opted for not incorporating the estimated uncertainty due to the (exponential) increase in complexity.

7 Conclusions

This dissertation has made contributions to the research field of comparative politics by exploring a novel conceptualization and operationalization of legitimacy as congruence between a set of five different legitimation claims pursued by rulers — their *menus of legitimation* — and the values and preferences – *the appetites* – of its citizens. This approach holds several advantages over existing measures that often suffer from two common mismatches between concept and measure. Most researchers conceptualize legitimacy as multi-dimensional but rely on unidimensional measures. Moreover, even as most view the concept of legitimacy as being inherently relational, existing approaches to operationalization are not. By contrast, my approach is both multidimensional and relational. The presented approach should not be viewed as final by any means; rather it is a preliminary attempt at outlining what is needed to pursue a novel understanding of legitimacy that is particularly suitable for comparative analysis. By all indications this is a worthy endeavor, despite the many challenges. In this process I have made several significant contributions that are distinct from the overarching theme of measuring legitimacy as congruence.

First, I have provided a novel data set on the regime-side of the equation by measuring rulers' key regime legitimation claims across most countries in the world from 1900 to 2020. This contribution is not only valuable for providing data on the regime-side of the congruence equation, but it can be used to study what drives governments to change legitimation strategies and what effect such changes have on important outcomes such as regime stability and the consequences for those subject to particular regimes. The data has already been used to explain variations in several areas: states' withdrawal from intergovernmental organizations (Choi 2021); co-optation and repression of religion (Schleutker 2021); and protest responses in autocracies (Keremoğlu, Hellmeier, and Weidmann 2021).

Second, I have shown, with both experimental data (in one country) and observational data (across a large set of countries) that commonly employed items to operationalize legitimacy and its neighboring concepts suffer from an autocratic bias, that is a self-censorship bias that does not operate uniformly across regime type. More repressive regimes enjoy inflated levels of regime-friendly responses on a wide range of questions. Survey items with response options that force respondents to reveal their inclination towards the rulers should not be used uncritically, and future work would do well to consider the obstacle self-censorship poses to the ability to compare public opinion data across regimes. Indirect questioning techniques, such as list experiments, are powerful tools to estimate sensitive opinions but require a larger sample, are cognitively taxing, and sacrifice individual-level data for aggregated estimates. Because

of these drawbacks, researchers will often have to rely on direct questions for sensitive topics. When direct questioning in necessitated and when information on perceived sponsorship is unavailable, researchers need to be explicit about the assumptions they are making with regards to self-censorship and how a violation of these may alter their inferences. This is especially prudent when the potential bias works "in favor" of the hypothesis being tested, as we are typically more concerned with false positives than false negatives. When this is the case, the conclusions could be strengthened by calculating a limit on how much bias the results are robust to. The researcher (and reader) can then make a better judgement of the robustness of the results, informed by what we know from studies on self-censorship using the aforementioned indirect techniques.

Together, the contributions of papers 2 and 3 go beyond the academic debate. Given that democracy-promotion and good-governance initiatives are often informed and guided by survey items measuring, for example, corruption perceptions and demand for democracy, which is the case for several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the findings hold direct relevance for development practitioners and policy makers. Clearly, for evaluations based on public opinion data to be valid respondents need to provide truthful responses.

I have used the findings from the two studies on self-censorship to identify non-sensitive (or at the least, much less sensitive) items to create indices of citizens' appetite for five dimensions of legitimacy: personalism, performance, rational-legal, ideology and traditional. I have matched citizen appetite with regime menu of legitimation to estimate legitimacy as congruence. In an empirical application I have shown the utility of my approach and have for the first time provided a measure of legitimacy that allows for both the citizen and regime side to vary. This is true concept-measurement validity. With congruence theory, it is possible both to conceptualize and measure legitimacy in any dimension without the researcher forcing a normative benchmark on the measure. A regime can be fully legitimate by fully relying on, for example, rational-legal legitimation claims or by disregarding such claims completely. What matters is the appetite of the citizens: they alone grant legitimacy in relation to what is being offered on the regime side.

In this dissertation I have shown that it is possible to conceptualize and operationalize legitimacy as congruence. This exercise can help us to better understand the interactions between rulers and ruled. I have shown that in line with the theoretical expectations, rulers offering a menu that matches poorly with their citizens' appetite are less politically stable and (have to) use more repression to stay in power. Conversely, rulers in regimes with a better match between menu and appetite are more stable and use less repression. This novel approach to measuring legitimacy holds a lot of promise. It hopefully will allow researchers to shed new light on the nature of rule and the relationship between rulers and the ruled in various contexts. It may be particularly important for better understanding the durability of different forms of hybrid regimes or the success and legitimacy of normatively illegitimate rulers' attempts to autocratize their countries, as it is possible that different configurations of appetite may enable or impede prospective autocratizers.

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This dissertation is based on the following papers.

I. Tannenberg, M., Bernhard, M., Gerschewski, J., Lührmann, A., & von Soest, C. (2021). Claiming the right to rule: Regime legitimation strategies from 1900 to 2019. *European Political Science Review*, 13(1), 77-94.

II. Robinson, D., & Tannenberg, M. (2019). Self-censorship of regime support in authoritarian states: Evidence from list experiments in China. *Research & Politics*, *6*(3), 2053168019856449.

III. Tannenberg, M. (2021). The autocratic bias: Self-censorship of regime support. *Democratization*, 1-20,

IV. Tannenberg, M. (2021). Legitimacy as congruence: Matching expert-coded and public opinion data. Unpublished manuscript.

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Towards Legitimacy as Congruence

Regimes' Menus of Legitimation and Citizens' Appetites

Legitimacy is one of the most crucial concepts in political science. It concerns how authority can be exercised in ways that those subjected to it willingly accept, something that all rulers desire. It is also one of the most contested concepts in the field, largely due to the difficulty of measurement. In this dissertation, I lay the foundations for a novel understanding of legitimacy, as the congruence between rulers' legitimation claims – their menus of legitimation – and the values and preferences – the appetites – of their citizens. In four separate research papers, I show the importance and utility of this approach. I provide empirical evidence that existing measures of legitimacy and its neighboring concepts, such as trust and popular support, suffer from a substantial autocratic bias. Self-censorship in autocratic countries results in inflated regime-friendly evaluations compared to in democracies. I conceptualize and develop measures of the most typical legitimation claims that rulers provide as justifications for why they are entitled to rule. I then match this expert coded data with global public opinion data to create measures of congruence between menus and appetites across five dimensions. Legitimacy as congruence provides a relational and multidimensional understanding of legitimacy, aligning the concept and its measurement. I show the value of this new measure in predicting outcomes for which the literature has strong theoretical expectations. I conclude that existing approaches to measuring legitimacy are flawed for the comparison across regime types, and that conceptualizing and operationalizing legitimacy as congruence provide an avenue to move the field forward.

ISBN 978-91-8009-847-2 (PRINT)
ISBN 978-91-8009-848-9 (PDF)
ISSN 0346-5942