The Legitimation of Regional and Global Governance Arrangements: Evidence from a Study of Media Discourses in Three European Democracies and the United States

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Questions

- Legitimacy in the post-national constellation: Are international regimes – and regional integration projects such as the EU – legitimate?

- How may the extent and foundations of a political order’s legitimacy be gauged?

- How is legitimacy (re-)produced, challenged, or transformed? -> legitimation processes
Some Concepts

Normative ("diagnostic") v. empirical perspectives on legitimacy

-> normative: Does a political order need to secure its legitimacy? Does it deserve to be qualified as legitimate? On which grounds?

-> empirical: Are citizens expect a political order to meet standards of legitimacy? Do they qualify it as legitimate? On which grounds?
Dimensions and Indicators of Empirical Legitimacy

- Political attitudes -> legitimacy beliefs
- Political behaviour -> (non-)compliance
- Political communication -> legitimacy assessments and legitimation discourses in public spheres
- Interaction among these dimensions – and between political elites and citizens – in the social construction of legitimacy
  -> debates rather than consensus
  -> legitimacy as “essentially contested” and “precarious”
  -> however, (arguably) against the backdrop of shared collective identities, value orientations, and political or discursive cultures
Key Issues of the Academic Debate

- Legitimacy v. a-legitimacy
- Legitimacy v. illegitimacy
- Democratic v. non-democratic foundations of legitimacy
# Four Narratives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>National regime legitimate</th>
<th>International regime legitimate</th>
<th>Scenario I: Erosion of democratic legitimacy</th>
<th>Scenario II: Collapse of democratic legitimacy</th>
<th>Scenario III: Transformation of democratic legitimacy</th>
<th>Scenario IV: Stable democratic legitimacy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>No elevation</td>
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<td>Irony</td>
<td>Romance</td>
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<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>Non-Democratic</td>
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<td>Comedy</td>
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**International regime legitimate**
- Zero-sum relationship
- Negative-sum relationship

**National regime legitimate**
- Delegation
- Legitimation

**Delegation**
- No elevation
- Elevation

**Legitimation**
- No resources
- Resources

**Scenarios**
- Scenario I: Erosion of democratic legitimacy
- Scenario II: Collapse of democratic legitimacy
- Scenario III: Transformation of democratic legitimacy
- Scenario IV: Stable democratic legitimacy

**Relationships**
- Zero-sum relationship
- Negative-sum relationship
- Positive-sum relationship
- Negative-sum relationship

**Narratives**
- Erosion
- Collapse
- Transformation
- Stability
Four Public Spheres

- Media discourses in CH, DE, GB, US
- Two (centre-left/centre-right) quality papers per country
- Discourses on national political orders, EU, G8, UN
- From 1998 to 2007 (event-based time windows)
Legitimation Grammar and Examples of Statements

Example 1: The people and their representatives have been sent to the sidelines by the courts, and that’s not right (Washington Post, 6 February 2004).

The judiciary... is illegitimate... because... it undermines popular sovereignty.


The EU Commission... is illegitimate... because... (1) it is inefficient/ineffective and (2) does not conform with legal standards.
Legitimation Intensity, International Regimes

![Graph showing the legitimation intensity of different international regimes over time. The graph compares UNO, G8, and EU.]
Speaker Types

- **EU**
- **G8**
- **UN**
- **National**

Legend:
- □ Journ.
- □ Nat. Pol.
- □ Int. Pol.
- ■ Civil Soc.
Legitimacy Levels, National and International Regimes
Legitimacy Levels over Time
Legitimacy Levels by Speaker Type
Legitimacy Levels by Object Type
Legitimation Criteria

- EU
- G8
- UNO
- National

Legend:
- Dem.
- Non-dem.
- Unspec.
Democratic Legitimation Criteria over Time

![Graph showing democratic legitimation criteria over time for National, UNO, G8, and EU. The graph plots data points from 1998 to 2007, with trends indicating fluctuations in the measures of democratic legitimation.]
Legitimacy Levels by Group of Criteria
Good, (Very) Bad, and Ugly Scenarios
Summary

- International regimes, and especially the EU, are no longer a-legitimate
- The democratic nation-state remains more legitimate than international regimes; the global and intergovernmental UN more than regional or supranational regimes
- The standard of democratic (input) legitimacy is becoming more problematic, especially for the EU
- Yet non-democratic (output) criteria provide no legitimation resources for international regimes either
- Public legitimation discourses are more in line with the “tragic” or even “ironic” narratives than with “romance” or “comedy”