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FORMS OF LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT

Legitimacy is "a value whereby something or someone is recognized and accepted as right and proper". In political science, legitimacy has traditionally been understood as the popular acceptance and recognition by the public of the authority of a governing régime, whereby authority has political power through consent and mutual understandings, not coercion. The three types of political legitimacy described by German sociologist Max Weber, in "Politics as Vocation," are traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal:

Traditional legitimacy derives from societal custom and habit that emphasize the history of the authority of tradition. Traditionalists understand this form of rule as historically accepted, hence its continuity, because it is the way society has always been. Therefore, the institutions of traditional government usually are historically continuous, as in monarchy and tribalism.

Charismatic legitimacy derives from the ideas and personal charisma of the leader, a person whose authoritative persona charms and psychologically dominates the people of the society to agreement with the government's régime and rule. A charismatic government usually features weak political and administrative institutions, because they derive authority from the persona of the leader, and usually disappear without the leader in power. However, if the charismatic leader has a successor, a government derived from charismatic legitimacy might continue.

Rational-legal legitimacy derives from a system of institutional procedure, wherein government institutions establish and enforce law and order in the

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public interest. Therefore, it is through public trust that the government will abide the law that confers rational-legal legitimacy.

More recent scholarship distinguishes between multiple other types of legitimacy in an effort to draw distinctions between various approaches to the construct. These include empirical legitimacy versus normative legitimacy, instrumental versus substantive legitimacy, popular legitimacy, regulative legitimacy, and procedural legitimacy. Types of legitimacy draw distinctions that account for different sources of legitimacy, different frameworks for evaluating legitimacy, or different objects of legitimacy.

In determining the political legitimacy of a system of rule and government, the term proper—political legitimacy—is philosophically an essentially contested concept that facilitates understanding the different applications and interpretations of abstract, qualitative, and evaluative concepts such as "art", "social justice", et cetera, as applied in aesthetics, political philosophy, the philosophy of history, and the philosophy of religion. Therefore, in defining the political legitimacy of a system of government and rule, the term "essentially contested concept" indicates that a key term (communism, democracy, constitutionalism, etc.) has different meanings within a given political argument. Hence, the intellectually restrictive politics of dogmatism ("My answer is right, and all others are wrong"), scepticism ("I don't know what is true, and I even doubt my own opinion"), and eclecticism ("Each meaning gives a partial view, so the more meanings the better") are inappropriate philosophic stances for managing a political term that has more than one meaning.

Establishing what qualifies as a legitimate form of government continues to be a topic of great philosophical controversy. Forms of legitimate government are posited to include:

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Communism, where the legitimacy of a Communist state derives from having won a civil war, a revolution, or from having won an election such as the Presidency of Salvador Allende (1970–73) in Chile; thus, the actions of the Communist government are legitimate, authorised by the people. In the early 20th century, Communist parties based the arguments supporting the legitimacy of their rule and government upon the scientific nature of Marxism.

Constitutionalism, where the modern political concept of constitutionalism establishes the law as supreme over the private will, by integrating nationalism, democracy, and limited government. The political legitimacy of constitutionalism derives from popular belief and acceptance that the actions of the government are legitimate because they abide by the law codified in the political constitution. The political scientist Carl Joachim Friedrich (1901–1984) said that, in dividing political power among the organs of government, constitutional law effectively restrains the actions of the government.

Democracy, where government legitimacy derives from the popular perception that the elected government abides by democratic principles in governing, and thus is legally accountable to its people.

Fascism, where in the 1920s and the 1930s it based its political legitimacy upon the arguments of traditional authority; respectively, the German National Socialists and the Italian Fascists claimed that the political legitimacy of their right to rule derived from philosophically denying the (popular) political legitimacy of elected liberal democratic governments. During the Weimar Republic (1918–1933), the political philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888–1985)—whose legal work as the "Crown Jurist of the Third Reich" promoted fascism and deconstructed liberal democracy—addressed the matter in Legalität und Legitimität (Legality and Legitimacy, 1932), an anti-democratic polemic treatise that asked: "How can parliamentary government make for law and legality,

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when a 49 per cent minority accepts as politically legitimate the political will of a 51 per cent majority?"

Monarchy, where the divine right of kings establishes the political legitimacy of the rule of the monarch (king or queen); legitimacy also derives from the popular perception (tradition and custom) and acceptance of the monarch as the rightful ruler of nation and country. Contemporarily, such divine-right legitimacy is manifest in the absolute monarchy of the House of Saud (est. 1744), a royal family who have ruled and governed Saudi Arabia since the 18th century. Moreover, constitutional monarchy is a variant form of monarchic political legitimacy which combines traditional authority and legal–rational authority, by which means the monarch maintains nationalist unity (one people) and democratic administration (a political constitution).

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