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# The Concept of Legitimacy\*

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*Stillman offers his own definition of legitimacy; in the course of explication he usefully illuminates the meanings and problems of the concept. He seeks to use the strengths of traditional definitions (which include reference to possession or pursuit of right values) and modern social science (notably Carl Friedrich's) conceptions of legitimacy. He offers the definition: the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems, that is, those affected by these results (especially the value pattern of the society, but also of individuals, groups, and other societies). The definition relates legitimacy to the values of the society, but does not hinge it on popular opinion about the government. Taking legitimacy to be a matter of degree rather than of either/or, the definition is held to be empirically useful, that is, to permit "operationalization," building, for example, on some of Lasswell's work. In sum, we are helped in inquiring into what justifies a particular system of ruling and what is the status of any specific regime.*

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## I.

The problem of legitimacy—the question of what makes a government legitimate or illegitimate and what justifies a certain type of rule or a certain system of ruling—has long been a matter of both theoretical debate

\* This article owes much to the ideas and criticisms of many individuals. I should especially like to thank Karl W. Deutsch, P. Gordon B. Stillman, my colleagues in the Political Science Department at Vassar, and the students in my political analysis courses.

and practical disagreement. Indeed, “since Plato and Aristotle, the idea if not the term legitimacy has always had a primary importance in political reflection.”<sup>1</sup> To some extent, all political philosophy can be seen as trying to answer the question to which *The Social Contract* was Rousseau’s answer: “What makes a government legitimate?”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the concept of legitimacy is pervasive in the writings of many modern social scientists, from Max Weber to contemporary theorists as diverse as Robert Dahl, Karl Deutsch, David Easton, Carl Friedrich, Seymour Lipset, Lucian Pye, W. G. Runciman, and John Schaar.<sup>3</sup>

The theoretical question of legitimacy—with its many answers—did not and does not have solely academic interest. A contemporary political scientist has observed that political violence varies “strongly and inversely with the intensity and scope of regime legitimacy.”<sup>4</sup> Conversely, as Weber noted,

Submission to an order is almost always determined by a variety of motives. . . . So far as it is not derived merely from fear or from motives of expedience, a willingness to submit to an order . . . always in some sense implies a belief in the legitimate authority of the source imposing it.<sup>5</sup>

Revolutions against and obedience to governments are frequently justified

1. Sergio Cotta, “Éléments d’une phénoménologie de la légitimité,” in Institut International de Philosophie Politique, ed., *L’Idée de Légitimité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 61.

2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social*, Book I, chapter 1.

3. See for example, Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), chapter 5; Karl Deutsch, “The Commitment of National Legitimacy Symbols as a Verification Technique,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, VII, 3 (September, 1963); David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), pp. 278–310; Carl J. Friedrich, *Man and His Government* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), especially chapter 13; Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), especially chapter 3; Lucian Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), pp. 62–67; W. G. Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); John H. Schaar, “Legitimacy in the Modern State,” in Philip Green and Sanford Levinson, eds., *Power and Community* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). Another and different list of contemporary scholarly definitions of legitimacy is Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 183–84.

4. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, p. 185.

5. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Talcott Parsons, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 132, sentences transposed.

if not partially caused by men's ideas about what constitutes legitimate government.

In view of the importance of the concept of legitimacy for political thought and action, an examination of the concept itself seems advisable. One recent attempt to define legitimacy has been made by Carl J. Friedrich, who states that the "question of legitimacy" is the "question of fact whether a given rulership is believed to be based on good title by most men subject to it."<sup>6</sup> This definition seems straightforward and agreeable; indeed, its most striking quality is, as definitions go, its clarity.

The meaning of most of its phrases is fairly simple. "Rulership" includes both the type of government and the specific individuals exercising political power. "Believed to be based" signifies that Friedrich is concerned with the opinions or feelings of men, and not, for instance, with what men ought to think or with any quasi-Platonic form of Truth. "By most men" indicates that the feelings of the majority are the determining factor. "Subject to it" asserts that only those persons subject to the rulership are to be considered; men not subject to the rulership are irrelevant to this definition.

"Title" may be considered as the reasons for or justifications of the ruler's ascension to and continuation in rulership; such "title" is "good" if it is congruent with the beliefs of most men. In different epochs and countries, the "beliefs of most men" about exactly what constitutes "good title" have varied widely from anointment (in some mysterious way) by the Lord or gods, to popular election in accord with clearly prescribed constitutional law, to *coup d'état*, to resounding promises of future national glory. To his definition, Friedrich adds many clarifications and implications, none of which materially modifies it. His most important additional assertion is that legitimacy does not necessarily equal legality.<sup>7</sup> Friedrich's definition of legitimacy, in short, is concise and clear; further, it is a definition which many modern Western democrats and political scientists might well be inclined to accept as "accurate" or "scientific" in some sense.<sup>8</sup>

6. Friedrich, *Man and His Government*, p. 234.

7. Loc. cit. This short discussion is a concise statement of the relationship between legality and legitimacy.

8. Friedrich's definition is almost identical with two other common, modern social science definitions of legitimacy: Lipset's, for whom legitimacy "involves the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society" (*Political Man*, p. 64); and Easton's, for whom legitimacy is "the conviction on the part of the member that it is right and proper . . . to accept and obey the authorities" (*A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, p. 278). Lipset's and Easton's definitions are among those referred to below as "Friedrich-like" definitions.

## II.

But, from the point of view of a scientific political science, there are some serious objections to the assertion that the “quest of legitimacy is the question of fact whether a given rulership is believed to be based on good title by most men subject to it.” For Friedrich’s definition, despite its neutral, factual, and scientific appearance, actually conceals three evaluative decisions, three cases where Friedrich has chosen, arbitrarily and silently, one alternative from a range of possibilities.

One evaluative decision is found in Friedrich’s phrase “men subject to [the given rulership].” This phrase states that only the subjects of the rulership—and not the inhabitants or governments of other countries—can determine the legitimacy of the country’s rulership. In contrast to Friedrich’s choice, however, Raymond Polin, a member of a recent symposium on “the idea of legitimacy,” has argued that a rulership, in order to be fully legitimate, must be viewed as legitimate by other governments.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, history teems with examples of men who thought that the opinion of a nation about its government’s legitimacy was neither necessary nor sufficient to make that government legitimate. Metternich, for instance, thought that—regardless of the opinion of the majority in any given nation—the great powers could and should decide the legitimate ruler of any country. Attitudes similar to Metternich’s have continued through this century; Vietnam and Czechoslovakia provide recent examples.

For some persons, then, legitimacy is dependent partially if not entirely on the opinions of other nations; Friedrich, along with many others, asserts the “national self-determination” of legitimacy. A definition of legitimacy must choose among defining legitimacy as completely, partially, or not at all dependent upon the opinions of other nations.

Friedrich’s second major evaluative decision is found in his words “by most men”; for Friedrich, legitimacy rests in the majority’s opinion. But many other theorists and actors have found the bases of legitimacy elsewhere than in the opinion of the majority. Burke, for instance, saw legitimacy as based on tradition, or “prescription”:

Prescription is the most solid of all titles. . . . It is accompanied by another ground of authority, . . . presumption . . . a presumption in favour of any settled scheme of government against any untried scheme. . . . A nation . . . is an idea of continuity . . . . And this is a

9. Raymond Polin, “Analyse philosophique de l’idée de légitimité,” in *L’Idée de Légitimité*, pp. 22 and 28.

choice not of one day or one set of people . . . ; it is a deliberate election of ages and generations.<sup>10</sup>

The Japanese until recently accepted divine descent as the criterion of legitimacy; and many in the West have considered kings to be legitimate by divine right. Shakespeare had Richard II say:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea  
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.  
The breath of worldly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

Nor are the judgments of tradition or of God the only sources of legitimacy different from Friedrich's; the preponderant opinion of the aristocracy, the white persons, or the males in a society has frequently been used as the criterion of legitimacy.

In defining legitimacy, then, a decision must be made about which group (or individual or source) decides whether a government is legitimate. Friedrich has "solved" the problem by choosing the group most appealing, on ideological grounds, to himself and his potential readers; he has chosen a "democratic definition" of legitimacy. That Friedrich's choice is ideologically appealing, however, does not affect the fact that he has made a choice from among the large variety of possible groups, a choice different from the choices of many other theorists and actors.

Friedrich's third choice is his evaluative decision to ignore values as a criterion of legitimacy. For Friedrich, a government does not have to be good, just, constitutional, peaceful, etc., in order to be legitimate; any rulership, regardless of its ethics and intentions, needs only belief in its good title by most of its subjects to be legitimate. Many other persons, however, have considered the possession of a certain quality or the pursuit of a certain value (or set of values) as a necessary condition for the legitimacy of the rulership.

For some, possession of a certain quality is essential. For Aristotle, theoreticians of feudalism, and Muslims, one requisite quality is the ruler's submission to the rule of law. For the Pope, Jesuits, and faithful Roman Catholics of England after 1570, Queen Elizabeth lacked the necessary quality, Roman Catholicism, and so was illegitimate. Others have sug-

10. Quoted in Friedrich, *Man and His Government*, p. 235, n. 5.

11. William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, III, ii, lines 54–57.

gested pursuit of certain values as the criterion of legitimacy. The Declaration of Independence asserted—as have many later theorists<sup>12</sup>—the securing of “certain unalienable rights” of man as the criterion. Hitler saw Weimar Germany as illegitimate because it did not establish the glories of Germany.

In the face of definitions in which the possession or pursuit of values is a necessary condition for legitimate rulership, Friedrich has excluded values from his definition. His decision is consistent both with the subtitle of his book and with post-Weberian social science. Nevertheless, it is an exclusion which makes his definition very different from many other definitions of legitimacy.

The above argument, in its most generalized form, asserts simply that all definitions of legitimacy involve making evaluative decisions, and that, in the case of Friedrich and most other modern social scientists,<sup>13</sup> these decisions are made implicitly, unconsciously, and arbitrarily. Indeed, there is an outline which all definitions of legitimacy follow, although some leave certain criteria blank, and some make more than one entry under some criteria:

A rulership is legitimate if and only if:

1. it is based on the beliefs of (one or more of the following groups; the first and second evaluative decisions in the above argument)
  - a) (all or some) other nations, states, or persons
  - b) the people unanimous
  - c) a majority of the people
  - d) a majority of some portion of the people
  - e) the king, dictator, etc.
  - f) tradition, ancestors, prescription, etc.
  - g) God
  - h) other
  - i) none or irrelevant
2. it has (any one or more of the following classes of norms; the third evaluative decision above)
  - a) possession of a certain quality (or qualities)
  - b) pursuit of a certain value (or set of values)
  - c) none or irrelevant

Any traditional definition of legitimacy can be placed in this outline.

12. For example, Paul Bastid, “L’idée de légitimité,” in *L’idée de Légitimité*, p. 11.

13. For example, the Friedrich-like definitions quoted in note 8, above.

Equally, however, any definition of legitimacy appears to involve choices among the distinct possibilities listed in the above outline, choices which have been made differently by different persons at different times.

One common objection might be made to the above argument. It might be argued that in the twentieth century men are no longer concerned with definitions of legitimacy based on divine right of kings or other outdated historical notions, and that therefore the argument is irrelevant, even if logically true. For, it could be asserted, democratic definitions of legitimacy—definitions similar to Friedrich's—have such a large following or consensus today that they ought to be accepted.

To some extent, the objection seems valid. Few persons expect governments today to base their claim to legitimacy on the divine right of kings or on descent from the sun goddess. On the other hand, the Spanish Pretender, Don Juan de Borbon y Battenburg, recently affirmed that his "duties and rights" as claimant to the Spanish throne were "irreversible and unrenounceable."<sup>14</sup> Of greater political significance, de Gaulle maintained that legitimacy resides not in majority opinion but in the existence of qualities tending to unite, rather than divide, the state.<sup>15</sup> Hitler partially based his legitimacy on racism and "Germany's destiny"; Communist governments partially base their legitimacy—and the illegitimacy of popularly elected capitalistic governments—on the dialectic of history. Although most modern dictators since Napoleon I and Napoleon III have held plebiscites or elections to show their "popular support," it is doubtful that they regarded themselves as legitimate solely because their subjects thought they were. In practice, the modern democratic definition of legitimacy is not pervasive even today.

Furthermore, some contemporary theorists are critical of democratic definitions of legitimacy and wish them replaced. At one extreme among contemporaries is Hans Kelsen, a legal positivist, who argues that the principle of legitimacy signifies that the validity of a system of laws "is determined only by the order to which it applies."<sup>16</sup> At the other extreme, Robert Paul Wolff has devoted at least one book to explaining that there exists no alternative but to "categorically deny *any* claim to legitimate authority by one man over another."<sup>17</sup> From less extreme stances, Wil-

14. Quoted in the *New York Times*, Sunday, 7 May 1967, sec. I, p. 22.

15. See Bastid, "L'idée de légitimité," p. 1. De Gaulle also declared that from 1940 he incarnated in his own person "la légitimité française" (Bastid, loc. cit.), a definition of legitimacy strangely reminiscent of the attitude of Louis XIV.

16. Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 115–22.

17. Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), especially p. 72. Italics and (as befits an anarchist) split infinitive in original.

son McWilliams and John Schaar, for instance, using ideas found in the works of Hannah Arendt and Bertrand de Jouvenel, have recently criticized the democratic definitions of legitimacy and have suggested their own. McWilliams looks for criteria of governmental illegitimacy, like governmental bad faith. Schaar, on the other hand, looks to "humanly meaningful leadership," to that authority which can provide the goals and the horizons by which we modern men can lead our lives.<sup>18</sup>

Without additional quotation, however, it is evident that there is disagreement in contemporary theory and practice about legitimacy. The definition of legitimacy has not been settled by consensus.<sup>19</sup> There remains the question of the meaning of the concept and the problem of the evaluative decisions that, it seems, must go into any definition of legitimacy.

### III.

The definition of legitimacy should be re-examined, because the current social science definitions are in practice not pervasive and in theory weak, containing apparently unconscious and concealed arbitrariness and bias. I suggest looking outside the traditional bounds and notions of political theory in quest of a satisfactory definition. This section proposes a tentative definition and considers some of its implications. The definition and explication below are couched in terms of "Lasswellean values"<sup>20</sup> and "systems." This phraseology is adopted primarily out of convenience. The term "actors"—or any similar term—could have easily substituted for system, for instance; likewise, I could have talked simply in terms of "values," and left Lasswell's name out. Either substitution could have been made without any loss to the definition; there is nothing sacred about "systems" or "Lasswellean values" to the following explication.

I suggest the following as a tentative definition of legitimacy: a government is legitimate if and only if the results of governmental output are compatible with the value pattern of the society.<sup>21</sup> Let me explain.

18. Wilson C. McWilliams, "On Political Illegitimacy," *Public Policy*, xix, 3 (Summer, 1971), especially pp. 444–54; Schaar, "Legitimacy in the Modern State," sec. v, pp. 308–15.

19. Which is, after all, only the democratic method of determining truth.

20. Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), especially chapters IV and V. (The eight Lasswellean values are: Power, Respect, Rectitude, Affection, Well-being, Wealth, Skill, Enlightenment.)

21. This definition of legitimacy is intended for political scientists. As such, it is merely a special case of the definition of legitimacy applicable to all behavioral

“The value pattern<sup>22</sup> of the society” is the specification, ranking, and ordering of that which the society esteems and seeks, in a world of scarcity where there are limits and costs to what can be esteemed, sought, and obtained. The value pattern of society is the generalized criteria of desirability, the standards for evaluation, the normative priorities, for the society. In non-Lasswellean language, the value pattern of the society is similar to the historian’s national character, to the subject matter of cultural anthropology, to the political scientist’s “civic culture” and political culture. A society’s value pattern specifies, for each Lasswellean value, the particular modes to be sought; for example, for fifth-century Athens, Enlightenment consisted at least partially of knowledge of the “fine arts”; in her contemporary Sparta, Enlightenment was primarily knowledge of the “arts of war.” Since many particular modes are sought, a society’s value pattern also ranks each mode; ancient Athens too pursued the “arts of war,” but esteemed them much less than the “fine arts.” Finally, since all societies seek some of each of the eight Lasswellean values, the specified and ranked modes of each value must be ordered with the other Lasswellean values by the society, so as to establish that society’s idea of the relationship among all its values, including the determination of its most important, or “key,” values. This ordering process, of course, may not be conscious; its results need not be mutually consistent. In sum, the value pattern of a society might be likened to the value pattern or character of an individual; the value pattern of a society is the character of the society.

“Governmental output” is a broad phrase; for governmental output includes not only the promulgated laws but any action of the government that has an effect on the society: for example, declarations of war; suppression of riots; executive fiats; Henry II’s private statement “Who will rid me of this man [Becket]?”; even intragovernment communications which eventually affect the society, such as verbal directives or memoranda suggesting “benign neglect.”

But it is the results—or the impacts—of governmental output, not

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science: the compatibility of a value-pursuing course of action with the value pattern of the actor.

22. “Value” is an ambiguous word: it may mean the esteeming or preferring of conditions, as in “valuing x over y,” or it may mean the conditions themselves, as in “x and y are values.” While Lasswell and Kaplan generally use the latter sense (for example, *Power and Society*, p. 57), I use value in the former sense, to mean esteem or prefer (except in Section IV), and thus value pattern is roughly synonymous with preference pattern.

solely the output itself, that must be considered. Thus, in the first place, unenforced antiquated laws that are incompatible with the current value pattern of the society have no results and thus do not affect legitimacy.<sup>23</sup> Second, the actual—not the intended—results of governmental output must be considered. Perhaps Henry II did not wish Becket killed; surely Lyndon Johnson did not wish what transpired in Vietnam; but in each case the results, not the intention, are central to legitimacy. Third, however, the government's intention, its processes, and the intrinsic nature of its authority may be important in questions of legitimacy if the society's value pattern is such that it values highly these characteristics. For instance, a military government, established by a *coup d'état*, might be legitimate in Libya. In the United States, however, such a government, regardless of its actions, would almost surely be illegitimate simply because the Constitution is so highly valued by the American society.

The results of governmental output must be "compatible with" the value pattern of society. Compatibility assures the maintenance and continuation of the society, by preventing value schizophrenia, value contradictions, and self-destruction. "Compatible with" does not require that the results of governmental output be exactly congruent with the value pattern of the society; but "compatible with" does imply that the results must be within a certain range of deviance from the existing societal value pattern. At a given time, there is probably a very large set of "results of governmental output" which is compatible with the value pattern of the society; but there are also many results which would pursue values so different from the society's values as to be incompatible. For instance, the American government in the fifties had a large number of alternative policies for regulating business, from complete *laissez faire* to full nationalization. If the government adopted either extreme, its act would have been incompatible with the value pattern of the society; but the regulatory policies it adopted were largely compatible with the then value pattern of the American society.

But one important modification must be made in my definition. Legitimacy cannot be limited to compatibility only with the value pattern of society; the results of governmental output may be compatible or incom-

23. In England, now as in the middle ages, it is illegal to shoot conies by night with a crossbow; unfortunately (from a strict "law and order" point of view), few now know what conies are (*The Field*, CCXXXVII, 6173 [13 May 1971], p. 933). Similarly, a colonial New Hampshire law states that profanity is punishable by one year in jail or a \$200 fine or both; a recent (1964) attempt to repeal this law failed (Robert E. Pike, *Tall Trees, Tough Men* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1967], p. 84).

patible—and the government thus legitimate or illegitimate—with reference not only to the value pattern of society but also to the value patterns of groups within the society, the value patterns of individuals, and the value patterns of other societies.<sup>24</sup> Societies are diverse internally; and governmental output influences or impinges upon other societies. The society is, after all, only one of the many systems affected by governmental output; many other systems, with differing value patterns, are affected.

Thus, the definition of legitimacy must be expanded: legitimacy is the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems. “Relevant systems” are simply those systems on or in which the results of governmental output are felt. In order to be legitimate, a government must have output whose results are compatible with at least four levels of systems: the international system, the society, groups within the society, and individuals within the society.

This definition has some interesting and important implications. In the first place, the definition of legitimacy is “objective” in that legitimacy does not depend at all upon the feelings of the people (or the aristocracy, the king, etc.) about the “legitimacy” of the government. The legitimacy or illegitimacy of a government is a matter not of popular opinion nor of belief about the “appropriateness” or “good title” of the government; legitimacy relates to the objective compatibility between the value patterns of the relevant systems and the results of governmental output.

Second, there is a set of implications in terms of determining the legitimacy or illegitimacy of any particular government. Because systems need not have the same characteristics as their components, because societies are diverse, the results of governmental output may be compatible with the value pattern of one system but incompatible with the value patterns of other systems. To imagine that every result of every governmental output can or will be compatible with the value patterns of all relevant systems is naive or utopian; indeed, outside of apolitical, conflict-free polities which are real only in imaginative minds, some illegitimacy is inevitable. Thus, legitimacy is not a dichotomous attribute—either present or absent, a gov-

24. A radical individualist may doubt the existence of societies or groups as systems with discernible value patterns; certainly the Gallup Poll, for instance, continually points up disagreements within a society or group. While the issues are part of a debate too complex fully to be considered, three points might be noted. One: on many issues, it is possible to find the societal preference; drastically oversimplified, whenever opinions on an issue approximate a normal curve, the societal preference is the mid-point. Two: on some issues, where opinion is distributed non-normally, no societal value pattern may exist (or it may be bifurcated). Three: even if radical individualists are correct, my definition still holds, but with three empty sets (the society, groups therein, and other societies).

ernment as either legitimate or illegitimate. Legitimacy, rather, varies along a continuum.

The degree of legitimacy of a government is a function both of the results of governmental output—results which may be intentionally or unintentionally contrary to the value patterns of some systems—and of the value patterns of the relevant systems. There are a large number of different systems within the lower two system levels of groups and of individuals. These many groups and individuals may—and usually do—have different and perhaps even contradictory value patterns, as do, for example, Italian Communists and Italian Monarchists or Northern Irish Protestants and Northern Irish Roman Catholics (groups) and as did, for example, Lenin and Czar Nicholas II (individuals). To the extent that individuals' and groups' value patterns differ markedly, there must be some incompatibility with the results of governmental output, and, therefore, some illegitimacy.

Indeed, since legitimacy is related to the value patterns of a society, it is possible to imagine a society in which legitimacy could not exist because the society's value pattern is bifurcated, too chaotic, or too contradictory, or especially because different portions of the society strongly hold different value patterns with different key values, as in the United States in 1860–1861, Pakistan in 1971–1972, and Northern Ireland still. In such cases, the results of almost any governmental output are compatible with some but incompatible with many value patterns; no matter what the results of governmental output, the degree of legitimacy in terms of groups and individuals is low. In short, some societies are so diverse that even low legitimacy is impossible; in almost all societies some illegitimacy exists. Legitimacy is a matter of degree.

As a third set of implications, although legitimacy is always a matter of degree, legitimacy is nonetheless a desirable property from the point of view of both the government and the society. A government benefits by being legitimate: by staying within the limits of compatibility with the value patterns of the relevant systems, the government is able to exercise power and allocate values with least cost, for few feel threatened, and with the greatest support, for most agree. The costs of governing are thus minimized for the government.

And the costs of governing are minimized for the society—and its component groups and individuals as well—when the government is legitimate. For governmental legitimacy assures society and its members that what they think important and valuable will not be contradicted or subverted by the government, and that their value patterns will be respected, maintained, and probably enhanced. Thus, for each actor the costs of anxiety and the costs of maintaining his value pattern are lessened. Further, the

assurance provides a framework within which the actors can plan and act with the expectation that the government will honor their commitments and will uphold rather than impinge upon their value patterns.

But legitimacy is not only or even primarily a guarantor of stability; the demand for legitimacy can, depending on the empirical circumstances, favor either continuity or change. A reform can increase legitimacy by reducing the incompatibility between output results and value patterns; indeed, in some cases reform is the only compatible or by far the most compatible governmental output result, and thus the only way to a high degree of legitimacy for a specific government in a specific situation. Furthermore, the value pattern of a society changes over time—for example, the definition of well-being changes from “what you can get in free market competition” to “social responsibility for welfare programs.” This societal evolution demands change in governmental output results if the government is to remain legitimate—for example, a movement towards a welfare state. Legitimacy also demands change where the society is so divided that there is much disagreement among groups and individuals, and perhaps so much intense disagreement that no societal value pattern can even be said to exist, as may have recently been the case in this country about the Vietnam conflict. Then governmental output results must change if societal divisions are to be lessened and the government is to regain a substantial degree of legitimacy.

Revolutions, as well, can be legitimate or illegitimate. Revolutions are in general predicated on the idea that the future government will be (in some way) “better” than the existing government. A legitimate revolution, then, would be a revolution that overthrows a government whose future output results have a high probability of being illegitimate; or, to be more precise, a legitimate revolution overthrows one government and replaces it with another, where the future output results of the new government have a higher probability of being legitimate than the future output results of the old regime. The English Revolution of 1688 is an excellent example of legitimate revolution.

Further, the value patterns of a society may themselves change during and after a revolution (and indeed during and after reform), so that a revolution’s result can be one which at the beginning of the revolution would have been illegitimate but which, after the transformation of the value pattern during the revolution, becomes legitimate by the end of the revolution. This may have been the case in the United States during the Revolutionary War era: independence from Britain was probably not demanded by the value patterns of most colonists as late as 1774 or 1775, but the events of those years so changed their value patterns that by mid-1776 independence had become a legitimate course of action. To use a

more recent example, and one related to reform, the New Deal era produced a change in attitudes and value patterns such that the reforms of the New Deal were, by the Eisenhower presidency, compatible with the value patterns of more individuals and groups than the New Deal measures had been before World War II.

As a final implication to be noted, judgments about legitimacy have a two-fold relation to time. In the first place, judgments of the legitimacy of past governments can consider the past governments not only at one point in time but also over a period of time. For instance, at various points in time between 1933 and 1945, Hitler's regime may even have been legitimate to a large extent. But the judgment of legitimacy can consider the regime as a whole, that is, can consider all twelve years together, and conclude with little trouble that Hitler's regime was illegitimate.

In the second place, however, statements about the legitimacy of present governments obviously cannot consider the regime as a whole—since the regime is continuing into the unknown future. Judgments of the legitimacy of present regimes, therefore, involve an element of prediction about the future. At times, however, these predictions about the future are not overwhelmingly difficult; for instance, a perceptive observer in 1941 could have foretold the illegitimacy of the military regime in Japan, with a high degree of probable accuracy.

#### IV.

In sum, then, legitimacy is the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems. This definition has many implications, some of which have been discussed. First, legitimacy is dependent not upon popular feelings about the government but on the compatibility between output and values. Second, legitimacy thus depends both on governmental output and on value patterns; as a result, it is a matter of degree, and in some circumstances perhaps it is unobtainable. Third, legitimacy is nonetheless desirable, for both governments and citizens; but legitimacy is not always nor only the property of existing governmental policies, for reform and even revolution may be legitimate. Fourth, judgments of legitimacy can be made both at one point in time and for a period of time. The definition has one further implication to be considered at length: that there exists some "absolute" standards implicit in the definition of legitimacy.

Human beings are value-seeking organisms; this statement can be considered to be a tautology, with the second half being an empirical generalization from universal experience. It may prove to be the case that human beings cannot exist without a minimum level of each of the eight Lasswel-

lean values;<sup>25</sup> in order to obtain Enlightenment, for instance, at least some Skill, Well-Being, etc. are necessary. (This statement is an empirically verifiable proposition.) Ergo, human beings must attain a minimum level of each of the eight values.

The implication of the above simple syllogism for legitimacy is plain: a government would be illegitimate if the result of its output reduced any of the eight Lasswellian values below the minimum level.

Unfortunately, this “absolute” is severely limited. For the minimal level of each value is probably so low that only the most tyrannical governments have approached going below the minimal level for the society as a whole. Perhaps it is possible to push the “absolute” another step.

Let me start by going a half-step back. It is possible to imagine human beings in a situation where this “absolute” does not hold: Rousseau’s state of nature.<sup>26</sup> In Rousseau’s state of nature, man did require some Well-Being, Wealth, Skill, and Enlightenment. But Rousseau’s savage did not require any of the deference values of Power (for if he were attacked by a stronger he would run), Rectitude (for he had no sense of right and wrong), Respect, and even, as an adult, Affection. Once someone “fenced off a plot of ground, took it into his head to say *this is mine*,” and founded civil society, however, the situation changed; deference values became a necessary attainment of human beings.<sup>27</sup>

Rousseau’s analysis suggests that this “absolute” may indeed change over time, or that it may have changed at least once. I suggest that in fact this “absolute” does change over time, but in a fairly consistent and predictable way. The minimum value requirement of the savage just out of Rousseau’s state of nature was less than a Roman’s minimum value requirement, and likewise the Roman’s was less than a modern Englishman’s minimum value requirement. The reason for the change in the minimum requirement of each Lasswellian value is that—as human knowledge, wealth, skill, etc., have increased—humans have come to pursue more difficult and more sophisticated specific modes and variants of each value. For instance, the Enlightenment that humans seek today is more complex and more difficult to obtain than the Enlightenment sought by the Roman or by the savage. And, as men seek more difficult and more sophisticated

25. In this section only, value is used to mean both the system’s preferences (what it values) and the system’s existing condition (what values it has attained); see note 22, above. The meaning is clear from the context.

26. Or any other very early state of man.

27. The references for the dearth of deference values are pp. 107–108, 128, 116, and 121 and 135, respectively; the quotation is p. 141, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, Roger Masters, ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964).

modes of a value, their minimum requirement of the other Lasswellian values increases.

Drastically oversimplified, the above arguments suggest that:

- 1) increased knowledge, wealth, skill, etc. lead to
- 2) more difficult and more sophisticated key value pursuit, which leads to
- 3) higher minimum requirements of the other values (in order to sustain the more difficult and more sophisticated key value pursuit).

Theoretically, at least, the argument is empirically verifiable.

If the argument is valid, the result is an “absolute” minimum value requirement which admittedly changes over time, according to the society’s level and amount of knowledge, wealth, skill, etc., and according to the key value sought by the society.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the implication for legitimacy is: that a government cannot produce output which results in lowering any Lasswellian value to the point where the society’s pursuit of its key value(s) is crippled or rendered impossible, without the government’s becoming illegitimate.

An example may clarify this. A modern country may value and seek Enlightenment (in the sense of scientific and humanistic knowledge) very highly; but, if that government limits the opportunity for Enlightenment solely to the rich (that is, those who have a certain level of Wealth) and effectively prevents the poor from obtaining Enlightenment, the government is crippling the pursuit of its key value Enlightenment by effectively prohibiting the many poor (but possibly brilliant) individuals from adding to the Enlightenment of the country. In absolute terms, the government is illegitimate because it allows the distribution of Wealth to cripple the quest for Enlightenment.

A further point must be noted. The above example relies in part on the idea of “regression towards the mean” in intelligence, for example, the children of the natural aristocracy are not, on the average, as brilliant as their parents. Until the idea of “regression towards the mean” was discovered, and until it was applied to intelligence, people could not be certain that limiting the facilities for Enlightenment did in fact cripple the quest for Enlightenment. Just as the discovery of the regression towards the mean in intelligence allows a relationship to be made between Enlightenment and Wealth, so too do and will other discoveries of the modern sciences enable other relationships to be made. Many of these relation-

28. This argument, without Lasswellian terminology, is substantially similar to that of T. H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1882), especially, for example, sec. 135.

ships may turn out to be potential “absolutes” in a definition of legitimacy.

In short, in a society whose key values are highly developed, the pursuit of these key values requires a high degree of pursuit and attainment of the other, non-key values. In modern societies—with highly developed key values, with much differentiation, division of labor, and interdependence, so that much development of non-key values is necessary—the “absolute” legitimacy of the government depends upon its output maintaining—or placing—the pursuit of those non-key values on a high enough level so that pursuit of the key value is unhampered.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, in modern societies—where the increase of knowledge, particularly knowledge of man, frequently indicates new dimensions of the interdependence among aspects of human life and surroundings—the knowledge of interdependencies between key values and non-key values is increasing. The result is that modern societies both demand and know of more interdependencies between key and non-key values; they thus insist that non-key value pursuit be high, and thus are able through knowledge to demand non-key value pursuit be high. The result is that, in modern societies, the absolute standard of legitimacy is far higher than it was for Rousseau’s savages, for the Romans, for the nineteenth-century Englishmen. The absolute standard of legitimacy which today’s government must meet is thus high.

## V.

Legitimacy is the compatibility of the results of governmental output with the value patterns of the relevant systems, or—to use non-Lasswellian language—a government is legitimate when it protects and enhances the values and norms of its citizens, when it preserves and expands their culture, and when it behaves itself in foreign affairs. Especially in view of the

29. While the course of history is certainly not a quasi-Comtean continuous progress, as long as modernity can be defined by the attainment and intensification of, for example, Parsonian “pattern variables,” then the overly brief and simplified argument in the text holds. (See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* [Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951], or many others works on modernization and modernity from Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [1651] to the present.)

The most obvious—in the twentieth century—contradicting alternative would be the arrival of a disutopia like that in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (New York: Harper, 1946), which would seemingly be legitimate by my definition (and certainly legitimate by Friedrich’s definition). But, to arrive at a *Brave New World* would require, I expect, a society going through a period of time in which the government is illegitimate, in terms both of the value patterns of relevant systems and of absolute legitimacy. Moreover, it can be doubted whether there are any Lasswellian values pursued in *Brave New World* except for Well-Being as stability and happiness.

opening argument that all traditional definitions of legitimacy apparently demand “evaluative decisions,” a justification of adding yet another definition to the existing ones seems imperative. This section proposes a justification.

(This section coincidentally fulfills another function: to demonstrate that my definition of legitimacy is in many ways similar to other definitions. Persons have used the term legitimacy frequently and have presumably had some idea of what they were talking about; redefinitions of legitimacy ought to talk about this same—albeit vague—“thing.” Obviously, I could define “legitimacy” as “a nice knock-down argument”; but I am trying to define the same—albeit vague—“thing” that past definers of legitimacy considered.)

The opening argument in Section II proposed a schema for all traditional definitions of legitimacy. The outline had two primary headings: (1) the beliefs of any stipulated reference group and (2) possession or pursuit of any stipulated norm or quality. I should like to consider the first part of the schema first. The current, Friedrich-like definitions and many traditional definitions consider the beliefs of a certain set of people about the government, whereas my definition of legitimacy considers the value patterns of the relevant systems and not specific people’s beliefs about legitimacy. There are some theoretical advantages to this choice.

In the first place, the consideration of value patterns of different systems and system levels does provide an excellent way to avoid the need arbitrarily to stipulate the reference group that has the “final say” about legitimacy. For, in my definition, “reference group” is replaced by “relevant systems.” In my definition, whenever governmental output is perceived to affect some systems, legitimacy is defined in terms of compatibility with those systems. To choose one system as the sole judge of legitimacy is to be arbitrary. To say that the value patterns of all systems, all reference groups may be the criteria of legitimacy and in fact are the criteria of legitimacy whenever they see their value patterns affected by governmental output—to do this is to replace arbitrary stipulation of one reference group with universal consideration of all systems.

Second, my definition clearly distinguishes legitimacy from the general feeling of citizens about their government, with the results that my definition of legitimacy, unlike the Friedrich-like definitions of modern social science, is a definition with criteria, a definition that contains the traditional and the common-usage conception of legitimacy as associated with “rightful,” and a definition which does not overlap with other important categories of political analysis.

The Friedrich-like definitions of modern social science are overly broad. They tend to judge legitimate the government of any society characterized

by minimal order and/or stability. Also, a charismatic leader beloved by most of his people for his style and rhetoric, who leads his country to national destruction—a Hitler—is legitimate if legitimacy be defined in terms of popular attitudes. Furthermore, if only popular attitudes matter, then in effect that government is most legitimate which propagandizes most effectively, which socializes most efficiently, which manipulates public opinion best. Finally, if legitimacy centers in the nature and processes of authority, in “good title,” then any policy—from the most humane through the most tyrannical—is legitimate if carried out by a government with “good title” operating within “the most appropriate institutions.”<sup>30</sup> While the Friedrich-like definitions consider as legitimate a very extensive range of governments, my definition can discriminate and adjudge illegitimate the tyrannical policies of government with “good title” to authority, the lying propaganda that contradicts the value patterns of the society, the Hitler who leads to the destruction of value patterns, and the government whose minimal order-keeping is not compatible with the demands for order and progress from the value patterns of the society. Where the Friedrich-like definitions cannot discriminate, my definition does.

As the above examples indicate, my definition is closer to the ordinary usage of legitimacy as “rightful” or “just” in some sense; for a definition that sees Hitler as legitimate, as do the Friedrich-like definitions, is surely far out of touch with the common usage of legitimacy, no matter how close it may be to current social science usage. And, my definition does not overlap other important analytic concepts. The Friedrich-like definitions are closely related to stability, consent and acquiescence, and diffuse support. My definition, on the other hand, is distinct from these aspects of political life. The concepts of analysis that seem close to my definition—effectiveness and responsiveness—differ significantly from my definition of legitimacy. For both effectiveness and responsiveness are usually defined as subjective terms, that is, so that a government is effective and responsive if its impacts conform to the citizens’ ideas of what they want; thus, at least during the thirties, Hitler was both responsive and effective; during the fifties and early sixties, the American government’s ignoring of pollution problems was both responsive and effective. But a legitimate government cannot be always concerned with “day-to-day” or uncritical

30. For a fuller criticism of the Friedrich-like definitions, see McWilliams, “On Political Illegitimacy,” especially pp. 430–36; and Schaar, “Legitimacy in the Modern State,” especially sec. II, pp. 282–86. The point about the nature and process of authority indicates why it is necessary—though radical—to divorce legitimacy from “good title” and concentrate on results, as I do. (Of course, if the nature or process of authority is part of the value pattern of a relevant system, then it is a criterion of legitimacy.)

responsiveness and effectiveness. For a legitimate government cannot effectively respond to demands that are self-destructive, that will tend over time to contradict value patterns of relevant systems, or that contradict the value patterns of a minority in the name of a (tyrannical) majority. In short, legitimacy, to the extent that it is similar to effectiveness or responsiveness, is long-term responsiveness that maintains the value patterns of the society and its citizens and that occasionally involves an immediately unpopular—but, in the long term, legitimate—policy.

The third theoretical advantage of my definition is that it facilitates a distinction between a government's legitimacy and the citizens' beliefs about that legitimacy. For my objective definition can be transformed into a subjective definition, that is, perceived legitimacy, where the perceiving is done by a reference group chosen by the social scientist. When thus transformed, and when the chosen reference group is all citizens, my definition becomes similar to the Friedrich type of definition. This transformation makes an analytically valuable distinction between legitimacy and beliefs about legitimacy. But the Friedrich type of definition is not easily transformable from a subjective to an objective definition, for example, from "believed to be based on good title" to "based on good title"; thus, the distinction is lost, and with it the concept inherent in my definition of legitimacy.

The second part of the schema in *Section II* noted that traditional definitions frequently demanded possession or pursuit of a norm or quality stipulated by the definer. On the other hand, my definition allows all systems to stipulate the values with which governmental output must be compatible in order for the government to be legitimate. As far as I can tell, there is no logically valid means to escape arbitrary choice at this point: a definition of legitimacy must have values stipulated either by the theorist personally or by a reference group (like all the people, or the relevant systems). Therefore, like Friedrich, and consistent with the dicta of the modern scientific method and the modern democratic value of self-determination, I do not define legitimacy in terms of my own values; rather, the systems within the society stipulate their own values and value patterns.

My definition of legitimacy, nonetheless, results in three limitations on the latitude of the systems to stipulate their own values—limitations inherent in the above analysis but not present in Friedrich-like definitions. In the first place, the government must be legitimate in terms of the "absolute" standards of legitimacy discussed above. Second, the systems may not demand self-destructive values. A government could not be legitimate in a country where self-destructive values were demanded by the system: for the government to pander to the demands would be to destroy the key value of the system and thus the government would be illegitimate;

and the government that did not pander would be illegitimate unless and until its actions sufficed to modify the value pattern of the society.

A third limit rests in the idea of “compatibility,” which insures that the several systems must demand, in general, classes of mutually compatible and viable values, rather than contradictory ones. For, to demand contradictory values is to insure that there can be no legitimate government and, furthermore, is to invite a sort of self-destructive confusion or even schizophrenia. But, to demand mutually viable values or, more precisely, for each system to have in its value pattern mutually viable values, imposes limits on the range of values each system—society, group, or individual—can have. For instance, a system that wants its world to be comprehensible and predictable, that wishes to be able to see some relations between means and ends, would probably have also in its value pattern values incompatible with arbitrary rule, a set of lies from the government, or a set of unfulfilled promises from the government.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the need for compatibility between governmental output and value patterns and the need for the mutual compatibility or viability of values within a value pattern provides a third limit on the systems’ stipulating their own values. With the exception of the requirements of absolute legitimacy, of non-self-destructive values, and of compatibility, my definition of legitimacy allows the different systems to determine their own values and value patterns. Legitimacy is a matter of values; the values are determined by the relevant systems.

## VI.

In conclusion, it seems superfluous to retrace the argument. The purposes of this article have been to examine carefully a term that is used frequently by political scientists, to place that term on as logical and scientific a basis as possible, to be clear about the evaluative decisions that are inherent in the defining of the term, and to be explicit about the implications of the

31. The particular examples here used—arbitrary government, lying government (or bad faith), and government by unfulfilled promises (or political bankruptcy)—are chosen because they are part of McWilliams’s criteria for illegitimacy; see McWilliams, “On Political Illegitimacy,” pp. 447–53. Though he may share them with some other Americans, they are only his personal and somewhat freely derived criteria; he notes, “I have selected my criteria of illegitimacy with some license” (*ibid.*, 454). But, given a society many of whose people value a world in which means and ends are related, McWilliams’s personal and freely derived criteria are empirically derivable from my definition as criteria with which many agree. Derived from my definition, the criteria have a validity and strength lacking in McWilliams’s personal and free derivation.

concept and the distinctions between legitimacy and other concepts: in short, to be as precise, as unbiased, and as clear as possible about the meaning and implications of the idea of legitimacy.<sup>32</sup> A discipline can only be as strong as its concepts. To start with a definition that is ideological or biased or arbitrary is to facilitate the possibility that the conclusion will be ideological or biased or arbitrary. To start with a clear scientific definition is to facilitate clear scientific results. And the clarification of a key theoretical and ideological term like legitimacy is particularly important at the present time, when political science is arguing rather strenuously within itself about what it is doing. For, without a clearly defined meaning, a concept may mean different things to different persons on different sides; and understanding is usually a prerequisite to productive communication among all sides.

### **Appendix: A Note on Operationalization**

The operationalization of my definition of legitimacy is both possible and productive of valuable results. It is possible because Lasswellean values and similar concepts have been operationalized in a variety of ways;<sup>33</sup> and, with some more work, it may be possible to ascertain both value patterns and the results of governmental output in terms of operationalized Lass-

32. From a somewhat different point of view, my definition of legitimacy can be regarded as combining aspects of the traditional and the contemporary meanings of legitimacy. For my definition is contemporary in that it is consistent with many tenets of modern social science and with the modern emphasis on individual self-determination: for example, following Weber, I do not specify values for what is legitimate; following modern self-determination, each system is allowed to decide its own values for legitimacy, its own criteria for compatible results of governmental output. Yet, at the same time my definition attempts to overcome some problems common to most modern social science definitions of legitimacy by retaining many aspects of traditional definitions, such as their emphasis on values, their use of legitimacy as a criterion of government, and their awareness of the implications of their definitions. From one point of view, then, my definition is an attempt to overcome the unscientific aspects of traditional definitions, and to modify current scientific definitions in the light of the traditional intents of the term; in short, to incorporate both the scientific and the traditional usages of the concept into a single definition not subject to the problems of either the scientific definition alone or the traditional definition alone.

33. For the operationalization of Lasswellean values, see especially J. Zvi Namenswirth and Harold Lasswell, *The Changing Language of American Values: A Computer Study of Selected Party Platforms* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Professional Papers, Sage Publications, 1970), and the references therein cited. For similar concepts, see, for example, Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

wellean values. Even in lieu of operationalized Lasswellean values—and it may be difficult, even for a convinced Lasswellean, to imagine the inter-subjectively successful operationalization of the “value pattern of the society taken as a system”—operationalization is still possible. Determining value patterns at the systems levels of individuals and groups is, of course, a common task of psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and cultural anthropologists. Determining the value patterns at the systems level of other societies is, equally, a common task of those studying international relations. The most difficult operationalization, that of the “value pattern of the society taken as a system,” is the task of historians and also—and more rigorously—of political scientists, as in the *Civic Culture*. And it should not be difficult to examine the results of governmental output in the same language as the values of the systems.

Two problems are immediately apparent. First, and more minor, is the problem that the “results of governmental output” are numerous, indeed in the modern world almost (it seems) infinite; to ascertain all results of governmental output, even for one year, would probably be the task of a (long) life-time. But a researcher can be selective, through wise discretion or random sampling.

The second problem is that, after operationalizing results of governmental output and the value patterns of systems on each of the four systems levels, it may be difficult to meld the judgments of legitimacy for each system level into the one single judgment so essential for comparisons. The answer may be theoretically impossible but in practical terms possible. For there probably exists a high correlation between legitimacy relative to the system level of individuals and that of groups. The value patterns of groups are probably very similar to the value patterns of their members. Few individuals join or stay in groups whose value patterns and key values differ markedly from the individual's; similarly, few groups remain viable when their value patterns differ from those of many of their members. Compulsory membership organizations—for example, some labor unions, some armies—might seem to be the chief exceptions; but recent research and analysis indicate a high degree of responsiveness by elites to the demands of the rank and file even in German trade unions, that is, indicate a similarity in value patterns between the group and its members.<sup>34</sup> To a slightly lesser degree, a high correlation between the society's value pattern and the value patterns of its groups and individuals might be expected. For individuals are socialized and educated, to some extent, into the society;

34. See, especially, Richard Willey, *Democracy in the West German Trade Unions: A Reappraisal of the “Iron Law”* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Professional Papers, Sage Publications, 1971).

and their value patterns are a component of the society's value pattern. Thus, the correlation or similarity among at least three system levels' value patterns is probably fairly good.

On the other hand, I see no reason why a high similarity would necessarily exist between legitimacy relative to the international system and legitimacy relative to any of the three internal systems.<sup>35</sup> Thus, there may exist no way to unite legitimacy relative to the international system with legitimacy relative to the three internal systems levels. At least, however, the judgments of legitimacy relative to the internal systems may be similar, so that cross-national comparisons of internal legitimacy are possible.

The operationalization of legitimacy as proposed here is not a simple process. The value patterns of the society as a whole, of the groups within the society, and of the individuals within the society must be ascertained; the results of governmental output—in terms both of what values it results in and of its significance—must be found; and then the two categories must be compared for compatibility. It is a difficult problem.

But it is a soluble problem, an empirical problem to which there is an answer. And, interestingly enough, the definition of legitimacy here proposed can be operationalized in a way that is both free from problems of the common, Friedrich-like definitions and productive of more information than they are. It is by no means simple to convert the Friedrich-like definition into a (comprehensible) survey question, especially one that distinguishes "legitimacy" from feelings about the President, pique at the latest run-in with the county government about trying to get a driver's license, etc. Even a successful operationalization, if it be possible, of the Friedrich-like definition would have a serious substantive problem: it would produce a purely historical finding, with little or no predictive or policy implications.

It is probably interesting to know what percentage of the population likes the existing government; but, unless one as an observing political scientist can predict and observe how this percentage can and may change, unless one as a policy-advising political scientist can state how this percentage can be changed, the knowledge is purely historical knowledge of little theoretical or political use. But the operationalization of my definition provides the way to the answer of what will happen when certain conditions change, by providing the necessary facts: the range within which governmental output can vary and still remain compatible with any given

35. This statement may be overly cautious. The Anglo-French 1956 invasion of Suez and the United States's prosecution of the Vietnam War provide two recent international escapades in which illegitimacy relative to the international system was followed closely by increased internal illegitimacy.

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percentage of relevant systems' value patterns; the range within which value patterns can be changed without requiring a major change in governmental output, etc.<sup>36</sup> The operationalization of the definition of legitimacy here proposed, then, is an operationalization leading to empirical knowledge that is useful for prediction and for policy, for theory and for practice.

36. In terms of description, prediction, and policy advising, the operationalization at the level of individuals and groups is the most important operationalization of internal legitimacy. That is, that operationalization which is the most difficult—"the value pattern of society as a system"—is the one which is also least necessary in practice.