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Sources of Legitimacy in Global Governance

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores how, in the quest for new global order, global governance might acquire greater sociological legitimacy. What are the sources of legitimacy in global governance? In other words, what conditions generate confidence and trust in global-scale authorities? To explore this question, the article first elaborates on the general concept of legitimacy as it relates to global regulation. Thereafter the discussion considers, under three main headings, a broad range of possible drivers of legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global governance. First, some of these sources are institutional, relating to features of the global regulatory organisations, such as their procedural inputs and their performance outputs. Second, other sources of legitimacy are individual, relating to the characteristics of the subjects of global governance, such as their identity orientations and their levels of social trust. Third, further sources of legitimacy in global governance are societal, relating to the general ordering patterns of world politics, such as prevailing norms, capitalism, and a hegemonic state. The article concludes by urging that researchers break from past habits of treating institutional, individual and societal sources of legitimacy separately and in isolation from each other. Instead, legitimacy in global governance can be more fully understood – and more effec-*

tively promoted in practice – if one examines these various forces together, and in terms of their mutual constitution.

KEY WORDS: *legitimacy, global governance, global policy, institutions, individuals, social structures, complexity, international organisation*

Introduction

A major difficulty for global order today is building effective global governance arrangements [*Hale et al.* 2013]. Contemporary society has experienced a great expansion of transplanetary connections and related policy challenges [*Scholte* 2005]. However, the supply of global-scale rules and regulatory institutions generally remains inadequate to tackle these problems. Consider, for instance, that the Secretariat of the United Nations (UN), the largest current global governance organisation, has less staff than the New York Fire Department and a budget smaller than the City of Stockholm. Not surprisingly, then, many global policy matters are woefully under-addressed. Think only of shortfalls in global cooperation regarding arms control, climate change, cultural heritage, cybersecurity, financial stability, health promotion, migration (mis)management, and so on.

Three major circumstances exacerbate these challenges for global governance. First, the world is seeing significant geopolitical shifts. Greater multipolarity and the rise of so-called 'emergent powers' (particularly China) are calling into question the normative underpinnings of post-1945 West-centric liberal internationalism. No longer is there clear primacy for world-order principles such as open international markets, universal human rights, representative multi-party democracy, and neocolonial international law and multilateral institutions [*Zakaria* 2011; *Wang* 2017; *Nederveen Pieterse* 2018].

Second, widespread anti-globalist populism makes many people across the planet resistant to governance beyond the state. Indeed, a significant opinion gap on matters of globalisation divides more sceptical citizens from their more persuaded ruling elites [*Norris, Inglehart* 2019; *Dellmuth et al.* n.d.]. To be sure, it is important not to exaggerate this populist opposition, as public opinion data also shows continuing – even growing – support for multilateralism [*Smeltz et al.* 2018; *Schulmeister* 2018]. Still, the world is witnessing popular challenges to global cooperation at the very moment when planetary problems have become more pressing than ever.

Third, the institutional designs of global governance are rapidly diversifying beyond traditional intergovernmental organisations. Today much if not most new global regulation is occurring through informal transgovernmental networks, private mechanisms, and multistakeholder initiatives [*Djelic, Sahlin-Andersson* 2006; *Büthe, Mattli* 2011; *Hällström, Boström* 2010; *Raymond, DeNardis* 2015]. These new institutional forms are often poorly understood, and coordination among the various types of global governance designs is frequently wanting.

What to do in the face of such normative, political and institutional instability and uncertainty? One key response could be greater legitimacy for global governance. If people (elites as well as citizens at large) held strong legitimacy beliefs toward global-scale rules and regulatory processes, then perhaps more – and more effective – cooperation on planetary problems could follow.

As understood here, legitimacy is a condition where people regard a regime to exercise its authority in an appropriate manner [*Weber* 1922; *Suchman* 1995]. A legitimate governing arrangement attracts underlying confidence, trust and approval. With such foundational endorsement, a regulatory body does not need to trick

and coerce its subjects: the governed willingly follow their governors. Legitimacy can make it easier for a regime to attract resources, to reach decisions, to obtain compliance, and generally to advance on policy problems [*Sommerer, Agné* 2018].

This is not to suggest that greater legitimacy would offer a panacea for successful global policy. Belief in the appropriateness of a regulatory framework is not enough by itself to handle planetary challenges. One also needs competent and visionary policymakers, effective design and operation of institutions, and a number of social changes (e.g. away from destructive ecological behaviour). Moreover, too much legitimacy could perhaps encourage global authorities to become complacent and thereby actually less effective [*Agné, Söderbaum* 2019]. Hence the argument here is not that legitimacy is the only and total solution for shortfalls in global governance.

However, larger levels of legitimacy could provide a great boost to the development of adequate global governance. Indeed, concerns about possible excessive legitimacy are today distantly hypothetical. The actual situation is one of repeated crises of global authority over the past several decades: the New International Economic Order programme in the 1970s; the Anti-Globalisation Movement in the 1990s; Occupy demonstrations in 2011-12; and anti-globalist populism today [*O'Brien et al.* 2000; *Reus-Smit* 2007; *Morse, Keohane* 2014; *Hooghe et al.* 2018]. The persistent problem is too little legitimacy – and accompanying major deficits of global governance capacity.

Considering this worrying underachievement, the present article explores how, in the quest for new global order, global governance might acquire greater legitimacy. What conditions would need to prevail in order for people to have more confidence and trust in global-scale authorities: i.e. what are the sources of legitimacy in global governance? Answers to this question could inform strategies to raise such legitimacy in practice, in the process also addressing the abovementioned challenges around power shifts, populism, and new institutional designs.

To develop such answers, this article first elaborates on the general concept of legitimacy as it relates to global regulation. Thereafter the discussion considers, under three main headings, a broad range of possible drivers of legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global governance. First, some of these sources are institutional: i.e. they relate to features of the global regulatory organisations, such as their procedural inputs and their performance outputs. Second, other sources of legitimacy are individual: i.e. they relate to characteristics of the subjects of global governance, such as their identity orientations and their levels of social trust. Third, further sources of legitimacy in global governance are societal: i.e. they relate to the general ordering patterns of world politics, such as prevailing norms, a hegemonic state, and capitalism. The article concludes by urging that researchers break from past habits of treating institutional, individual and societal sources of legitimacy separately and in isolation from each other. Instead, legitimacy in global governance can be more fully understood – and more effectively promoted in practice – if research examines institutional, individual and societal sources together, and in terms of their mutual constitution.

Legitimacy

Developing an analytical framework to study the sources of legitimacy in global governance first requires some preliminary elaboration of the concept of legitimacy. To that end the following discussion addresses, in order: (a) a general definition

of legitimacy; (b) a distinction between normative and sociological legitimacy; (c) the objects of legitimacy beliefs (conventionally the state, but now also global governance); and (d) the political subjects (or audiences) who accord or withhold legitimacy toward one or the other global regime.

GENERAL DEFINITION

As already mentioned, legitimacy is understood here as the belief and perception that governors exercise their authority (i.e. their power to rule) appropriately. When people regard a regime to be legitimate, they see it as rightful. They have an underlying confidence in and enduring approval of the regulatory arrangement in question. As such, legitimacy entails more than mere contingent and ephemeral backing for a governing apparatus, where support is limited to and dependent upon particular rulers or certain policies [*Easton* 1975]. Indeed, legitimacy means that people can acquiesce to political decisions that they oppose, since they have a foundational faith in the regime that produces those decisions [*Gibson et al.* 2005]. Legitimacy as a core 'confidence' and 'trust' thereby runs deeper than conditional 'support'.

Hence, for example, supporting Christine Lagarde as Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or backing the IMF's guidelines for fiscal policy are not the same thing as, with legitimacy, endorsing the IMF's authority as such. Conversely, belief in the legitimacy of the Fund could allow people to accept IMF leaders whom they might dislike, to tolerate IMF decisions that they might oppose, and to forgive certain IMF policy failures. For example, most observers would say that the Fund has poorly handled several global financial crises; however, influential elites have, with legitimacy beliefs, nevertheless generally continued to uphold the IMF as a regime.

NORMATIVE AND SOCIOLOGICAL LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy can be understood in normative and in sociological terms. Normative legitimacy exists when a governance arrangement meets certain philosophically developed moral standards [*Buchanan, Keohane* 2006]. In a normative vein, social and political theorists have rooted the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of global order in arguments about democratic, distributive, cognitive, ecological and other forms of justice (e.g. [*Archibugi et al.* 2012; *Scholte et al.* 2016; *De Sousa Santos* 2007; *Shiva* 2005]). In contrast, sociological legitimacy prevails when the subjects of a given authority through their attitudes and behaviours demonstrate an underlying confidence in and approval of that power.

Understanding this distinction between sociological-empirical legitimacy and normative-philosophical legitimacy is vital. It is one thing to determine through empirical research that a regime is sociologically legitimate. It is a different exercise to argue through political theory that an authority is normatively legitimate. Indeed, sociological and normative legitimacy can sometimes radically collide. To give a stark example, the Nuremberg Rallies evidenced considerable sociological legitimacy for the Nazi state in the 1930s: the assembled crowds deeply embraced the regime. However, it of course does not follow that Hitler's power was normatively right by standards of moral philosophy.

Taking a less extreme illustration from today's global governance, empirical research might show that the World Bank attracts substantial sociological legitimacy. In this case, many people who are affected by the Bank would believe that it exerts its power appropriately. Nevertheless, a political philosopher could still maintain that the World Bank was normatively illegitimate, say, for failing to meet certain standards of social and ecological justice.

Fully rounded knowledge of legitimacy requires both sociological and normative analysis. The present article is concerned with sociological legitimacy of global governance. The objective here is to understand the concrete dynamics of legitimacy around global regimes: how actual people regard actual authorities. In other work I have developed my own personal-political positions concerning the normative-philosophical grounds of legitimate global governance [*Scholte* 2014; *Scholte* 2015; *Scholte* 2016; *Scholte* forthcoming]. It is important to build both types of theory.

Indeed, the two approaches to legitimacy – sociological and normative – suitably inform and support each other. Normative analysis can guide sociological enquiry in terms of selecting the issues and contexts that are most important for empirical research. Normative theory can also provide criteria with which to assess empirical findings about sociological legitimacy: i.e., should we support or oppose actually existing patterns of legitimacy? Conversely, sociological analysis can alert normative theory to the live issues of the day and the kinds of popular arguments that philosophers need to address in order for their ideas to be politically influential. In addition, sociological analysis can tell normative thinkers how far their philosophical criteria are actually alive in wider society – and what kinds of concrete political changes would be necessary in order to make society ripe to implement certain normative visions.

OBJECTS OF LEGITIMACY

Modern political theory has explored legitimacy mainly in relation to the state [*Weber* 1922; *Arendt* 1956; *Lipset* 1960; *Parsons* 1960; *Easton* 1965; *Habermas* 1973; *Barker* 1990; *Beetham* 2013]. The premise for this work has been that societal regulation occurs mostly, or even exclusively, through the territorial nation-state. Hence, until recent decades, to study political legitimacy was to study the state.

However, contemporary governance has come to involve much more than the state, including substantial elements of global regulation [*Rosenau, Czempiel* 1992; *Barnett, Finnemore* 2004; *Weiss, Wilkinson* 2018]. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the world has seen unprecedented proliferation and growth of various kinds of regional and global governance institutions. As noted earlier, these agencies now include not only formal treaty-based intergovernmental organisations (e.g. the International Telecommunication Union, ITU), but also countless transgovernmental networks (e.g. the Nuclear Suppliers Group, NSG), private mechanisms (e.g. the International Federation of Association Football, FIFA), and multistakeholder arrangements (e.g. the Forest Stewardship Council, FSC).

Not surprisingly, then, scholarship of recent decades has increasingly enquired into sociological legitimacy vis-à-vis governance beyond the state. The earliest such research examined public opinion toward the European Union (EU) [*Inglehart* 1970; *Lindberg, Scheingold* 1970; *Hewstone* 1986; *Hobolt* 2012]. Since the 1990s, studies of sociological legitimacy have broadened to consider global-scale governance as well [*Bodansky* 1999; *Hurd* 1999; *Hurrelmann et al.* 2007; *Brassett, Tsingou* 2011; *Tallberg et al.* 2018]. Most of this research has examined perceptions of appropriate authority vis-à-vis intergovernmental organisations [*Clark* 2003; *Reus-Smit* 2007; *Zaum* 2013; *Zürn* 2018; *Dingwerth et al.* 2019; *Tallberg, Zürn* 2019]. However, certain works have also considered legitimacy in respect of nongovernmental global governance [*Cashore* 2002; *Bernstein, Cashore* 2007; *Dingwerth* 2007; *Bernstein* 2011; *Curtin, Senden* 2011].

A key question in the backdrop is of course whether and how sociological legitimacy towards global authorities oper-

ates similarly or differently from sociological legitimacy towards the state. Are perceptions of rightful rule higher or lower for global governance institutions as compared with the state? Does legitimacy in global governance have similar or contrasting sources relative to the state? So far we lack sufficient theory and evidence to draw firm conclusions on these questions, but it is an important matter for future research.

SUBJECTS OF LEGITIMACY

Sociological legitimacy is conferred by subjects: it is a relationship of affected people to that which affects them. The subjects of a governance apparatus can be grouped into its 'audiences' or 'constituencies' [*Bexell, Jönsson* 2018]. Early thinking tended to limit the subjects of global governance to states [*Franck* 1990; *Hurd* 1999; *Clark* 2005]. In other words, theorists supposed that a global regime would be legitimate if it had an underlying confidence and approval of its member governments. Nowadays researchers increasingly appreciate that the audiences who can legitimate (and delegitimate) global authorities include nonstate actors as well. So studies of legitimacy in global governance need also to examine the views of business, civil society, media, political parties, research institutes, staff of the global governance agencies, and publics at large [*O'Brien et al.* 2000; *Della Porta, Tarrow* 2005; *Clark* 2007; *Symons* 2011; *Bernauer, Gampfer* 2013; *Voeten* 2013; *Gronau, Schmidtke* 2016].

The different subjects of a global governance arrangement often attribute different degrees of legitimacy toward the regime. For example, such variation might occur on geopolitical lines, with subjects holding higher or lower levels of confidence in a given global authority depending on their country or regional affiliation. Other variation in legitimacy perceptions vis-à-vis global governance may correspond to social groupings, for instance, in relation to age, class, gender, language, or race. Further variation can be ideological, depending on political persuasion, religious faith, or other knowledge orientation. Still other variation may be temporal in character, as legitimacy for a given global regulatory arrangement can shift over the years, decades or longer periods. In short, it is important to consider not only the overall legitimacy for a given global authority, but also to break down the variations in extents of legitimacy perceptions across that regime's different constituencies and over time.

Turning to the sources of legitimacy, the question is where sociological legitimacy comes from vis-à-vis global authorities. What circumstances make subjects extend (or withhold) an underlying confidence and approval toward a given global regime? Past research on legitimacy in global governance has suggested many possible grounds, which the present analysis classifies under the headings of institutional, individual, and societal sources. The next three sections of this article examine each of these categories in turn.

To underline from the start: this successive treatment does not imply that we should regard institutional, individual and societal forces as separate drivers of legitimacy that operate in isolation from each other. It is a major shortcoming of existing literature on legitimacy in global governance (as reviewed below) that it has generally emphasised either one or the other of these three types of sources. Thus, earlier research has tended to consider *either* institutional, *or* individual, *or* societal factors. In contrast, the argument developed here suggests that legitimacy vis-à-vis global governance (or indeed any other regulatory authority) arises from the combination and interrelation of all three dimensions – institutional, individual and societal. The present analysis therefore urges a more holistic perspective.

Institutional sources

Institutional sources of legitimacy relate to features of the governing organisation itself [*Scholte, Tallberg* 2018]. Various theorists have highlighted different institutional qualities as drivers of legitimacy perceptions toward global governance. Often research on institutional sources of legitimacy has, following Fritz Scharpf, distinguished between 'input' and 'output' qualities of a governance organisation's operations [*Scharpf* 1999; *Hurd* 2007; *Ecker-Ehrhardt, Wessels* 2013; *Binder, Heupel* 2015; *Bernauer et al.* 2017; *Dellmuth et al.* 2019]. The present article addresses a broader range of potential institutional sources of legitimacy by considering not only procedure ('inputs') and performance ('outputs'), but also purpose and personality. Thus, we arrive at a fourfold scheme of potential institutional drivers of legitimacy in global governance.

With regard to procedure (or 'input' sources of legitimacy), underlying confidence in a global regulatory agency can derive from its organisational structure and processes [*Johnson* 2011; *Bernauer, Gampfer* 2013; *Helfer, Showalter* 2017; *Anderson et al.* 2018; *Dellmuth et al.* 2019; *Tyler* 1990; *Esaiasson et al.* 2019]. In a procedural vein, subjects confer legitimacy owing to the way that a regulatory body operates, possibly even regardless of the results of its decisions and policies. For example, audiences might find the World Bank legitimate because they view its policymaking processes to be transparent, efficient and/or non-discriminatory. Conversely, constituents might withhold legitimacy on input grounds if they feel that a global governance organisation follows undemocratic, incompetent and/or unfair procedures.

With regard to performance (or 'output' sources of legitimacy), confidence in a global governance apparatus can come from satisfaction with its results [*Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2015; *Tallberg et al.* 2016]. On performance lines, subjects trust a regulatory institution due to its impacts, possibly even regardless of how it formulates and executes the policies that generate those impacts. Hence, actors might find the International Labour Organisation (ILO) legitimate because they perceive it to improve working conditions around the world. Conversely, failure to deliver such outcomes could be an institutional performance reason for actors to withhold legitimacy from the ILO.

With regard to purpose, subjects may accord legitimacy to a regulatory institution because they believe in the function or mission that the organisation serves [*Scott* 1991; *Lenz, Viola* 2017]. For example, people may view the UN to be legitimate because of its aim to advance peace, even if in practice the regime may often struggle to realise that goal. Similarly, audiences may have faith in the World Health Organisation (WHO) because it fights disease. Or constituencies might have confidence in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) because it champions a single global digital communications infrastructure. In these cases, legitimacy arises from the rationale of the global institution, rather than its actual operations (procedure and performance).

With regard to personality, here the character and charisma of global governance leaders fuels legitimacy beliefs [*Scholte* 2011]. Audiences may trust a given regime because they find certain individuals, or perhaps a larger collective of the organisation's staff, to induce confidence. For example, Kofi Annan as an in many eyes inspirational and visionary UN Secretary-General arguably enhanced the legitimacy of that organisation during his period of office in 1997-2006 [*Meisler* 2008]. In contrast, dull management by faceless bureaucrats could discourage legitimacy beliefs in other global governance settings.

In practice, the various institutional sources of legitimacy – procedure, performance, purpose and personality – operate concurrently and in any number of combinations. Indeed, in interviews for my own empirical research, people often explain their legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global governance with reference to a blend of different organisational features, sometimes even mixing them together in the same sentence. Thus while the conceptual framework presented here distinguishes four categories of institutional sources for analytical convenience, in actual legitimacy perceptions these various qualities tend to interrelate.

Individual sources

Whereas institutionalist explanations locate the drivers of legitimacy in qualities of the governing organisation in question, individualist accounts suggest that beliefs in rightful rule result (also) from circumstances of the person [*Tyler* 2006; *Dellmuth* 2018]. From this perspective, legitimacy perceptions derive from the perceiver (the individual), as distinct from the perceived (the institution). Possible individual sources of legitimacy include *inter alia* subjects' sense of social identity, their calculation of self-interests, their emotions, their levels of social trust, and their political knowledge.

In respect of social identity, an individual's perceptions of legitimacy in global governance may substantially reflect the degree to which that person connects their sense of being and belonging with spheres beyond the nation-state [*Norris* 2000; *Norris* 2009; *Furia* 2005; *Torgler* 2008; *Ecker-Ehrhardt* 2011; *Ecker-Ehrhardt* 2016; *Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2015]. On this proposition, individuals with more cosmopolitan dispositions would be more ready to give legitimacy to global authorities, perhaps in the process even forgiving failures in institutional workings. So a person who identifies with transnational networks and/or a world community (e.g. proclaiming 'I am a global citizen') could more readily trust governance from a global level. Conversely, individuals who focus their social identity only around localities and countries would be less likely to accord legitimacy to global governance, regardless of how well the supranational regime might operate institutionally. Thus, on this logic we might expect the legitimators of global regulation generally to espouse more cosmopolitan identities, while the delegitimators would usually hold more communitarian bonds.

In respect of interest calculation, legitimacy perceptions toward global governance would reflect the degree to which individuals estimate that they – either themselves personally or their collective affiliation(s) – gain or lose from the regime in question [*Anderson, Reichert* 1995; *Scheve, Slaughter* 2001; *Lake* 2009; *Mansfield, Mutz* 2009]. These benefits and costs from global governance could be economic (e.g. in terms of employment and income), biological (e.g. in terms of health and environment), political (e.g. in terms of status and influence) or psychological (e.g. in terms of learning and friendships). For example, based on interest calculation, some subjects might approve of global governance in the belief that it raises their well-being. In contrast, other subjects might distrust authority beyond the state in the perception that it endangers their security. The explanatory logic of interest calculation says that it is not institutional performance per se that determines legitimacy beliefs, but subjects' utilitarian cost-benefit assessments vis-à-vis those outcomes. So some people might believe in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) because they calculate that this global regime improves their lives, while others might reject the WTO because they gauge that it undermines their well-being.

In respect of emotions, affect theories suggest that legitimacy beliefs (like other social attitudes) flow from subjective experiential feelings [*Deleuze, Guattari* 1991; *Tomkins* 2008; *Ahmed* 2014]. From this perspective, it is not so much a person's construction of identity or calculation of interest that matters for legitimacy in global governance, but rather their emotional reaction in terms of anger, calm, confusion, disgust, distress, empathy, excitement, fear, joy, love, pain, pride or shame [*Hutchison, Bleiker* 2014; *Hall, Ross* 2015; *Brassett* 2018]. Indeed, it is striking how often, in my research interviews about legitimacy in global governance, respondents express agitation, exuberance, and sometimes even tears. On affective lines, anti-globalist populism often seems to be driven as much (if not more) by emotional discontent than by reasoned argument. To date no research on legitimacy in global governance has specifically and systematically explored its affective aspects, which seems an unfortunate omission.

In respect of social trust, this fourth type of individual explanation suggests that legitimacy beliefs are a function of a person's general faith in the other side of their relationships [*De Cremer, Tyler* 2007]. On this logic, people who have an overall high trust towards the individuals and institutions in their lives would be more ready to have confidence in ruling authorities, including global regimes. Conversely, people with a generally suspicious disposition towards others in society would be less likely to lend legitimacy to (global) regulatory apparatuses. In this vein, a number of studies have investigated the relationship between trust in national government and trust in governance beyond the state. This research finds that people with confidence in (or scepticism about) domestic institutions are inclined to project that trust (or distrust) onto global and regional institutions as well [*Kritzinger* 2003; *Muñoz et al.* 2011; *Voeten* 2013; *Armingeon, Ceka* 2014; *Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2015; *Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2018; *Schlipphak* 2015].

In respect of political knowledge, this proposition holds that legitimacy perceptions are shaped by the amounts and qualities of political awareness that an individual holds [*Dellmuth* 2016]. For example, having information and understanding about global governance could make a person more ready to give these regimes legitimacy. On this reasoning, subjects who lack awareness of global authorities (like ICANN or the WHO) are unable to form opinions about, or construct bonds of legitimacy with, such regulatory bodies. Knowledge deficits regarding global governance can also more readily fuel feelings of alienation and perceptions of threat that encourage illegitimacy perceptions vis-à-vis these regimes. People might fear an IMF or an EU that they do not understand. From another angle, the way that political leaders and the mass media communicate information about global governance could also affect popular legitimacy beliefs, although the empirical evidence for this proposition is mixed [*Schuck, De Vreese* 2006; *Gabel, Scheve* 2007; *Loveless, Rohrschneider* 2011; *Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2016].

As with the institutional drivers discussed earlier, individual sources of legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global governance do not operate in isolation from each other. Thus, for example, levels of political knowledge can influence levels of social trust. Meanwhile most people's psychology does not operate with *either* identity logics, *or* interest logics, *or* emotional logics, but rather with some combination of the three. Research on legitimacy in global governance needs therefore to consider the concurrent – and often interconnected – workings of several forces related to the individual.

Societal sources

Whereas institutional explanations locate the drivers of legitimacy beliefs in organisational features, and individual accounts root the sources of legitimacy perceptions in the subject, societal perspectives focus attention on forces related to the social order [*Scholte* 2018]. On this third broad line of explanation, legitimacy derives not (only) from institutions and individuals, but (also) from the social structures in which these actors are embedded [*Merton* 1949]. Possible structural forces that could shape beliefs in rightful global rule include *inter alia* prevailing social norms, modernity, capitalism, reigning discourses, a hegemonic state, and social stratifications. We now consider these six types of potential societal sources of legitimacy in turn.

Social norms are conventions, principles, standards and values that set the terms of acceptable behaviour and living conditions in a given socio-historical context. On this line of argument, subjects tend to regard global governance as legitimate to the extent that it conforms to the prevailing norms of the day – and illegitimate to the extent that it deviates from those standards [*Clark* 2007]. Prominent legitimating norms in contemporary global governance include gender equality, human rights, humanitarian assistance, market efficiency, sovereignty, sustainable development, and transparency [*Keck, Sikkink* 1998; *Bernstein* 2001; *Barnett, Finnemore* 2004]. Showing acute awareness that norms matter for legitimacy, global regulatory bodies such as the UN go to considerable lengths to align themselves with these principles: e.g. by creating a Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and by pursuing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Equally, global governance agencies know that declaring opposition to key contemporary world-order norms such as gender equality or sovereignty could hugely undermine confidence in their authority. In these ways norms exert considerable structural power on legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis global regimes.

Yet there is a further question to ask: namely, why do dominant norms have the particular character that they do in a given socio-historical context? After all, principles such as social equality, humanitarianism, transparency, and sustainable development have not prevailed in all times and places. Arguably these legitimating norms of global governance relate to certain other qualities of the social order. What then are the further social structures which determine that certain norms are dominant in contemporary society while others are not?

One possible such social structure is modernity. After all, norms such as human rights, state sovereignty, and sustainable development were not dominant before the modern era. Sociologists do not agree on the main characteristics of modernity, but conceptions usually highlight features such as capitalism, industrialism, militarism, nationalism, rationalism, and statism [*Weber* 1922; *Parsons* 1960; *Giddens* 1985; *Mann* 1986]. The proposition, then, is that legitimating norms such as democratic accountability, fair distribution, and market efficiency are embedded in, and a product of, modern society.

Importantly for global governance, modernity is a social structure not only of countries, but also of contemporary world society [*Robertson* 1992; *Krücken, Drori* 2009]. In this perspective, global governance institutions are expressions of – and a means to reinforce and spread – modern social structures on a planetary scale. Global regimes such as the UN and the WTO would then be regarded as legitimate when they conform to the main social norms of modernity (such as liberal democracy, technical effectiveness, and human rights) and as illegitimate when they violate modern principles of a good

society. Owing to the structural power of modernity, the contemporary world is unlikely to see legitimacy in global governance that is based on the non-modern norms of certain indigenous cultures and religious movements.

Some theories about societal sources link legitimacy in global governance to a specific quality of modernity, such as capitalism. Marxists and some other materialists argue that surplus accumulation is the primary ordering pattern of modern society. These approaches regard other social structures such as industrialism and nationalism as subordinate to – and a function of – capitalism. In this perspective, governance is mainly about making rules to enable surplus accumulation, and legitimacy is about creating trust in such regulation, even if it might underpin large material inequalities in society.

For historical materialists global governance – especially in areas of production, trade, investment, money and finance – serves to facilitate surplus accumulation on a world scale [*Cox* 1987; *Gill* 1992; *Rupert* 1995; *Bieler et al.* 2006; *Mittelman* 2011; *Slaughter* 2015]. Legitimacy is then in the first place a question of rendering global capitalism appropriate by, for example, nurturing confidence in corporate business and the profit motive [*Paterson* 2010]. Such is the explicit objective of actors like the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Neo-Gramscian critical theory highlights the role of 'hegemonic ideology' (e.g. around discourses of 'free markets' and 'corporate social responsibility') in creating legitimacy for exploitative relations of global capitalism [*Cox* 1983; *Worth* 2015]. Meanwhile social movements such as the World Social Forum (WSF) and the Occupy protests have targeted capitalism and associated inequalities in their efforts to delegitimise existing global economic governance [*Gill* 2008; *Chomsky* 2012; *Smith et al.* 2014].

Like neo-Gramscian notions of ideology, discourse theories maintain that ideational aspects of modernity are especially important societal sources of legitimacy beliefs. A discourse is an ordered arrangement of verbal consciousness: i.e. a pattern of language and communication that forms a framework for knowing the world. The social-structural power of discourse entails that certain forms of meaning are embedded as the 'conventional wisdom' in a given societal context. This dominant knowledge at the same time marginalizes or excludes alternative understandings of the world [*Larner, Walters* 2004; *Bonditti et al.* 2017].

Discursive structures become sources of legitimacy in global governance when they set the linguistic terms and knowledge frames for assessments of appropriate authority [*Bell* 2002; *Edkins* 2008; *Van Leeuwen* 2008]. For example, market discourses and technical discourses are pervasive and powerful around today's global economic governance. In other words, merely hearing global authorities talk about market efficiency and technical expertise can have a legitimating effect on audiences. Other prominent legitimating discourses in contemporary global regulation include 'peace', 'security', 'accountability', 'multistakeholder participation', and 'resilience' [*Williams* 2003; *Ebrahim, Weisband* 2007; *Chandler* 2014; *Gleckman* 2018]. Such linguistic cues can encourage legitimacy perceptions toward global governance, even when subjects struggle to articulate what these words actually mean. Meanwhile resistance movements often mount discursive attacks on 'neoliberalism' in their efforts to delegitimate contemporary global governance [*Bandy, Smith* 2005]. Opponents often invoke discourses around 'injustice', 'unaccountability', and 'imperialism' in their campaigns to delegitimise existing global regimes.

Moving to another possible societal source of legitimacy, the concept of a

hegemonic state proposes that confidence in global governance arises when a dominant government constructs and upholds rules and regulatory institutions of world order – and exercises this leadership in a way that substantial audiences in the international system trust. Thus a hegemonic state sustains global governance not only with a preponderance of resources (economic, administrative, military, and ideological), but also with widespread audience approval of its role in underwriting world order. Hegemonic global governance is thereby not coercive, but viewed as legitimate [*Agnew* 2005].

Notions about hegemonic states figure especially in realist and liberal schools of international relations theory. These arguments have usually proposed that the United States Government acted as a hegemonic state in global governance during the second half of the twentieth century – and perhaps beyond to the present day [*Keohane* 1984; *Gilpin* 1988; *Ikenberry* 2011]. On a similar logic, such authors have argued that the absence of a hegemonic state in the early twentieth century largely accounts for the weakness of trusted global governance at that time [*Kindleberger* 1973]. Other scholars have speculated that China or perhaps a collective of states like the Group of Twenty (G20) could fulfil a hegemonic role in global governance for the twenty-first century [*Kirton et al.* 2001; *Postel-Vinay* 2011; *Robinson* 2011]. Some might read recent global governance interventions from China (such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Wuzhen World Internet Conference) as prospective moves towards hegemony.

A further possible structural source of (il)legitimacy in global governance lies with social stratifications: i.e. entrenched inequalities between group categories. Such hierarchies in (world) society can relate to age, caste, class, (dis)ability, faith, gender, geography, language, nationality, race, sexual orientation, and species (i.e. *homo sapiens* over other forms of life) [*Sklair* 2001; *Runyan, Peterson* 2014; *Picq, Thiel* 2015; *Cudworth, Hobden* 2018]. In each case, the dominant side of the axis (e.g. men, global north, or white persons) has structural advantages of power and resources over the corresponding subordinate side (e.g. women, global south, or people of colour). Inasmuch as subjects regard such social stratifications to be fair or unfair, these structural inequalities can become implicated in legitimacy beliefs. Thus, people could perceive a global governance arrangement as illegitimate to the extent that they see it to embody and produce arbitrary social hierarchies. Conversely, a global regulatory institution could attract greater legitimacy insofar as subjects see it to resist and reduce imposed social stratifications. For example, critics have often attacked the IMF for allegedly increasing gaps between rich and poor countries and people, while the UN has won much applause for its efforts to advance gender equity.

Much as the various possible institutional and individual sources of legitimacy in global governance may interconnect with and affect each other, so the different potential societal sources may also interrelate. Thus, for example, a hegemonic state can help to uphold a global capitalist order, and vice versa. Capitalism through its uneven distribution of surplus can fuel social stratifications, and concurrently those hierarchies can help advantaged categories of people to pursue accumulation. One and the other discourse can both reflect and reinforce the position of a hegemonic state, capitalism, or social stratifications. Given this potential multiplicity of social structures, and their complex interconnections, researchers arguably should not in advance affirm the primacy of one particular societal source of legitimacy, but rather explore the possible relevance of several such forces in combination.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the importance of legitimacy in global governance as a force for (re)creating global order. The core premise is that, when people have underlying confidence, trust and approval vis-à-vis global authorities, those regimes are generally better able to take action on planetary problems. Conversely, deficits of such legitimacy substantially weaken global governance and leave society with less direction over pressing planetary challenges (e.g. of digital economy, ecological change, transcultural understanding, and so on). It is therefore vital to comprehend what circumstances can give rise to legitimacy in global governance, as well as what conditions can undermine confidence in global regimes.

To this end, the article has presented a threefold overview of possible sources of legitimacy in global governance, in terms of institutional, individual, and societal drivers. The analysis has further distinguished several types of more particular sources under each of these three headings. So institutional sources could relate to procedure, performance, purpose, and personality. Individual sources could relate to identity, interest, emotion, social trust, and political knowledge. Societal sources could relate to prevailing norms, modernity, capitalism, discourse, a hegemonic state, and social stratification. We thereby have many possible and plausible bases of legitimacy in global governance.

It seems highly unlikely that the drivers of beliefs in appropriate global authority reduce to just one or two of these many potential sources. We have already noted above that the various institutional sources can overlap and have combined effects, as can the various individual sources and the various societal sources. Thus it is not procedure or performance that count, but both. It is not identity or interest, but both. It is not capitalism or discourse, but both.

In addition, political sociology teaches that one cannot ontologically separate individual, institutional and structural power in society (cf. [*Lukes* 2005]). This maxim would suggest that legitimacy in global governance lies not in actor forces by themselves (individuals and institutions) or in structural forces by themselves, but in a co-constitution of agents and ordering patterns. Anthony Giddens has dubbed this mutual determination of actor and structure as 'structuration' [*Giddens* 1984].

How does structuration unfold in respect of legitimacy in global governance? Such an approach would expect institutional sources to matter, but societal sources would largely determine which purposes, what kinds of procedures, what sorts of outputs, and what types of personality attract legitimacy beliefs. Likewise, a structuration explanation would expect individual drivers to matter for legitimacy in global governance, but societal drivers would largely frame how persons construct their identities, calculate their interests, feel their emotions, and formulate their knowledge. Conversely, and simultaneously, societal sources have no force if individuals and organisations are not continually reproducing structures through their perceptions, decisions and behaviours. Neither agency nor structure can exist without the other, and a holistic explanation of legitimacy in global governance would focus on this co-constitution rather than just one side or the other.

Yet to date no empirical research on legitimacy in global governance has fully followed through on this seemingly rather straightforward premise. Empirical investigations on this subject are multiplying, as the literature cited in this article amply indicates. However, the studies almost invariably examine *either* institutional, *or* individual, *or* societal sources – i.e. in isolation from each other. Indeed, many existing empirical analyses of legitimacy in global governance consider only one or two more specific 'fac-

tors' within one of the three broad categories. For example, a study might assess the significance of a hegemonic state or a particular discourse, while leaving out all other possible 'independent variables'. An occasional work has compared the significance of certain individual sources (such as identity orientation and interest calculation) with that of certain institutional sources (such as procedure and performance) [*Dellmuth, Tallberg* 2015; *Verhaegen et al.* n.d.]. But these pieces, too, have measured the impacts on legitimacy as discrete factors rather than as combined forces. Meanwhile no study at all of legitimacy in global governance has yet systematically crossed the agent-structure divide. We therefore wait for empirical work that considers all three types of sources – institutional, individual, and societal – and in particular examines their interrelations and mutual determination in the production of legitimacy for global governance.

To be sure, investigations that build on the structuration principle will be methodologically challenging. Existing quantitative research on legitimacy in global governance (e.g. using surveys, experiments and content analysis) has only examined actor-based sources, without attempting to operationalise societal sources. Moreover, this work has only measured discrete factors and at best considers 'interaction effects', rather than the merged effects of combinations and interrelations. To get at mutual constitution probably requires more ambitious methods, for example, connected with complexity thinking and systems models.

Given such challenges for quantitative analysis, more holistic research of legitimacy in global governance might, for now, be better pursued through qualitative case studies. Indeed, it seems highly improbable that each instance of legitimacy in global governance would involve the same combination of institutional, individual and societal sources. Thus, for instance, the drivers of legitimacy vis-à-vis the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are unlikely to be the same as the forces that propel legitimacy around the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The dynamics may also shift over time: for example, the sources of (il)legitimacy for the WTO that prevailed in 1995 may well be different from the drivers that exist in 2019. Combinations of sources of legitimacy in global governance may also vary by country or region (e.g. the formula is different in Canada and China), as well as by social sector (e.g. the dynamics unfold differently for businesspeople and for civil society activists).

Given this complexity of multiple interconnected sources, whose combinations may vary across several dimensions, it hardly seems possible to offer a single specific and fixed formula for explaining legitimacy in global governance. What we can do – as this article has done – is construct a framework of analysis that encompasses a full range of possible sources of people's confidence in and approval of authority beyond the state. After that, working out which particular combination of forces operates in which particular setting of global governance is a matter for empirical investigation.

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Источники легитимности в глобальном управлении

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БЛАГОДАРНОСТЬ: Идеи в этой статье развились во многом благодаря моему участию с 2016 года в программе «Легитимность в глобальном управлении» (LegGov) при щедром финансировании со стороны Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Грант M15-0048:1). Аргументы, представленные здесь, основаны на (хотя в некотором отношении и выходят за пределы) более ранней коллективной работе LegGov, особенно Jonas Tallberg, Karin Bäckstrand and Jan Aart Scholte (eds), Legitimacy in Global Governance: Sources, Processes, and Consequences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Я благодарю своих коллег по LegGov, а также двух анонимных рецензентов за их очень полезные отзывы о предыдущих проектах статьи.

АННОТАЦИЯ. *В статье исследуется, как в поисках нового глобального порядка глобальное управление может приобрести большую социологическую легитимность. Каковы источники легитимности глобального управления? Иными словами, какие условия порождают доверие и уверенность в авторитетах мирового масштаба? Для изучения этого вопроса в статье сначала рассматривается общая концепция легитимности применительно к глобальному регулированию. После этого в рамках обсуждения по трем основным направлениям рассматривается широкий круг возможных движущих сил легитимности глобального управления. Во-первых, некоторые из этих источников носят институциональный характер и связаны с особенностями глобальных регулирующих организаций, такими как их процедурные вклады и результаты их деятельности. Во-вторых, другие источники легитимности являются индивидуальными, связанными с характеристиками субъектов глобального управления, такими как их ориентация на иден-*

тичность и уровень социального доверия. В-третьих, дополнительные источники легитимности в глобальном управлении – социальные, связанные с общими упорядочивающими моделями мировой политики, такими как господствующие нормы, капитализм и гегемонистское государство. Статья завершается призывом к исследователям отказаться от прежних привычек рассматривать институциональные, индивидуальные и социальные источники легитимности отдельно и изолированно друг от друга. Вместо этого легитимность глобального управления может быть более полно понята и более эффективно воплощена на практике, если рассматривать эти разнородные силы вместе и с точки зрения их взаимного устройства.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: *легитимность, глобальное управление, глобальная политика, институты, индивидуумы, социальная структура, сложность, международная организация*

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