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## IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: INVESTIGATING AUTHORITY LEGITIMIZATION FROM DISTINCT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

## ABSTRACT

**Research objective:** This research critically examines legitimization in illiberal democracies, emphasizing its influence on governance.

**Material and methods:** This research explores legitimization across political, business, and socio-cultural spheres, using a focused analysis to compare normative and positivist perspectives, specifically David Beetham's and Jean d'Aspremont's. It examines authority legitimization, analyzing its connections with authority, government, law, and democracy, focusing on legitimacy of origin and exercise.

**Results:** Beetham argues that power and legitimacy are closely intertwined. Legitimacy includes compliance, rationalization based on popular beliefs and explicit consent. D'Aspremont's work on government legitimization, emphasizing the importance of origins and practices, is linked with democratic principles. It suggests that origin legitimacy evaluates the source of authority, typically linked to democratic elections, while action legitimacy examines the exercise of authority.

**Conclusions:** Beetham and d'Aspremont's analyses of authority legitimization and legitimacy's roots highlight the significance of understanding power's legitimization for sociology, political theory, and philosophy. Their work reveals its importance for scientists, politicians, and business leaders alike. For scientists, it informs ethical research and policy development. Politicians gain insights for crafting policies that resonate with the public, enhancing governance. Business leaders, through these principles, can improve corporate governance and build stakeholder trust. Understanding normative and positivist approaches to legitimacy can guide leaders to make decisions that are effective, ethical, and widely accepted, emphasizing legitimacy's role in enhancing practices across various fields.

**KEYWORDS:** *legitimacy of origin, legitimacy of exercise, governance, power, societal impact*

## INTRODUCTION

The tumultuous aftermath of World War II, caused by the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the communist Soviet Union, prompted the strongest democratic nations to establish an international organization, the United Nations, aimed at promoting cooperation in various realms of politics, economics, and culture. Subsequently, in the following decades, numerous British, French, and other European colonies gained independence. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the collapse of the communist bloc in Europe, leading to

the liberation of certain European countries. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, collaborative efforts in politics, economics, and culture between nations contributed to the endorsement of democratic political systems by major and affluent democracies, particularly the USA, Great Britain, and France. As a result, democracy became a universally embraced political framework, symbolizing the harmonious and prosperous development of societies.

Notwithstanding significant strides made in advancing democracy, certain countries continue to possess democratic institutions labeled as illiberal democracies (Gratton & Lee, 2024) in scholarly discourse. The governance practices in such nations markedly diverge from fundamental principles, making the issue of authority legitimization politically consequential in these contexts.

The democratic world has embraced definitive guidelines, which can serve as benchmarks for democracy in any nation. Foremost among these criteria is the conduct of free and fair elections, which bestow legitimacy upon elected authorities. Those in power strive to maintain this legitimacy, both in the eyes of their societies and representatives from other countries. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that media, through framing, can selectively present information to engender a one-sided perspective, leaving recipients as passive observers bereft of a comprehensive context. Consequently, individuals often resort to diverse sources and methodologies, such as observations and interviews, to acquire a broader understanding. For both those in power and their subordinates, authority legitimization has become an indispensable consideration. The democratic world demonstrates a keen interest in the absence of authority legitimization, employing varied methods to influence autocratic nations. A pertinent example is contemporary Belarus, where the president faces disapproval from the international community and is denied access to official meetings with heads of state.

Democracy forms the bedrock of genuine authority legitimization. In the absence of democracy, authority lacks legitimization. The issue of authority legitimization warrants examination based on its strength or degree, with legitimization primarily contingent upon two factors: the nature of elections (whether direct or indirect) and the adherence of governing bodies to established rule of law. This raises the question: under what circumstances can those in power lose their legitimacy?

Mere assertions of good or complete legitimization, or the absence thereof, prove inadequate. Instead, situations may arise where legitimization is weak or sufficient. Thus, in this paper distinguishing between different levels of authority legitimization is aimed to facilitate the identification of criteria necessary for drawing conclusions about the quality of the legitimization process and comparing those in power.

## **LEGITIMIZATION OF POWER ACCORDING TO DAVID BEETHAM**

Beetham maintains that it is necessary to clearly distinguish the concept of power from the concept of legitimization (1991, p. 42). However, he adds that such a separation would be artificial, as the mutual interaction of power, governance, norms, and legitimizing actions creates a typically intricate internal relationship, wherein each element is influenced by others.

The legitimization of power lies at the very core of sociology and political theory due to its potential implications for social development. According to Beetham, there are three professional groups interested in issues of power legitimization, each approaching it from a different perspective. These groups include legal experts, sociologists, and philosophers of morality and politics. For legal experts (...), power is legitimized when its acquisition and exercise align with established law. *For them, legitimization is equivalent to legal validity.* (...) (Beetham, 1991, p. 4) For a philosopher of morality and politics, power is legitimized when the rules governing it are just and in accordance with rationally conceived normative principles (Beetham, 1991, p. 5). In other words, for a philosopher, what is legitimized (lawful, legally justified) is that which is morally justified or right. Legitimization involves the moral capacity to justify power relations. On the other hand, sociologists purpose is an explanatory one. That includes:

- what are the empirical consequences of legitimacy on the nature of power relations and the extent to which power figures currently rely on obedience and support from their subjects,
- the basis of people's expectations regarding power relations,

- why institutions granted the right to exercise public power vary depending on the type of society,
- motivations for using coercive power,
- the reasons for the erosion of power relations, which can result in dramatic violations of social order, leading to riots, uprisings, or revolutions.

In all societies, there are people who possess power over others. That is why power is *a basic and recurrent feature of all societies* (Beetham, 1991, p. 3).

Power can be exercised in various ways, and subordinates often perceive it as oppressive, often demeaning, *and sometimes life-threatening* (Beetham, 1991, p. 3). For this reason, power is considered problematic by scientists (Young, 2022). For similar reasons, communities aim to restrict power within the bounds of legitimate regulations. Conversely, leaders strive to gain approval for their governance from their key constituents. When power is obtained and wielded in accordance with legitimate regulations and backed by evidence of approval, it is considered fair or legitimate (Beetham, 1991, p. 3). There are three criteria for the legitimization of power (Beetham, 1991, p. 20):

1. adherence to regulations or laws (legal validity),
2. capacity to rationalize rules based on common beliefs,
3. endorsement through explicit consent.

It is often difficult to determine to what extent power is legitimized. Questions arise regarding the legitimization of power in different times, especially during periods of *legal uncertainty, moral disagreement, or intense social and political conflict* (Beetham, 1991, p. 3).

Legitimization of power occurs within a social context and is based on power relations between entities (Fasli, 2005). In contemporary times, knowledge is also a way to legitimize power (Kelly, 2007). Power becomes illegitimate if it is gained through means that break the rules (such as seizure, overthrow, or coup) or used in ways that breach or surpass those rules. When the regulations governing power are habitually violated, it signifies a persistent absence of legitimacy (Beetham, 1991, p. 16). Examples of unlawful use of power were already pointed out by Coleman (2017).

Legitimacy is not a binary issue. In every power dynamic, there are instances where rules or norms are breached; in every community, individuals exist who reject the norms upholding power structures, as well as those who withhold their consent or offer it only when coerced. The foundation of legitimacy can be weakened, challenged, or left unfinished; assessments of it are usually made based on its extent rather than strictly defining it as entirely existing or not (Beetham, 1991, p. 20). It's worth noting that the legitimization of power in Russia carries a different meaning than in normally developed democratic societies. The October Revolution laid the groundwork for legitimizing authority, acting as a catalyst towards power. During that period, the Bolshevik power gained widespread belief and support, emerging victorious in the civil war. As a result, the party, Lenin, and the Red Army all acquired practical legitimacy. Such a growing tradition was intertwined with internal party struggles. The slogan *Those who are not with us are against us!* propelled the class struggle forward. The fate of those who opposed it was tragic. Those who emerged victorious, revealing the truth and achieving victory over their opponents in the 1920s and 1930s, gained the right to condemn them to oblivion in history. This highly qualified and educated elite (Miller & Smith, 2015) were labeled as the so-called adversaries of the populace, while the winner asserted themselves as the custodian of history.

During the Soviet rule, there was no question of the legitimization of authority. The concept of *revolutionary legality* (Mamlyuk, 2019) emerged, nullifying the rule of law that had operated before. It was also a hatred towards the past, which could not annul that law.

### **SOURCES AND FORMS OF LEGITIMIZATION OF POWER**

The transition of power is a commonplace occurrence observed in every nation. This shift impacts millions of individuals, evoking feelings of hope or apprehension. The concept of legitimization of power was developed by Max Weber. According to him, the essential characteristic of the state is the *legitimate use of force*. He notes that power is capable of achieving its objectives when subordinates perceive the government's authority as binding. Weber's contribution lies in the triple typology of legitimized (legal) power: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic. These explain the

possibility of some individuals exercising power over others (Eisenstadt, 1968, pp. 11–17, 215–216).

Traditional legitimization of power stems from customs (precedents and habits), religion, and the authority of rulers. This form of power situation has been shaped by tradition and is regarded as something sacred. Traditional forms of legitimization of power existed in many societies but were primarily upheld in feudal monarchies. According to Weber (Eisenstadt, 1968, p. 46), traditional power hindered the development of legal (rational) forms of authority.

The charismatic form of legitimizing power has its source in an emotional relationship between people and their recognition of the leader's charisma, understood as exceptional character, extraordinary talent, or individual heroism. Charisma is considered an extraordinary quality of a person's personality, endowed with unique powers or traits. Such qualities can be possessed by leaders who have a distinct speaking style, actions, or other exceptional characteristics (Metz & Plesz, 2023). And it does not matter whether leaders actually possess such qualities; it is enough that followers believe in the leader's abilities. Charismatic legitimization does not necessarily have to be personal, as Arnould and Dion (2023) questioned. Instead, they pointed out that leadership can address the inherent human limitations of charismatic legitimization by establishing a brand dynasty, where its heirs embody the brand's personality, defined through reference to its founder. Authority legitimized through charisma can indeed serve as a genuine source of power. Among charismatic leaders we find figures such as David Ben-Gurion, Mahatma Gandhi, Charles de Gaulle, Nelson Mandela, Golda Meir, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Józef Piłsudski, Theodore Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher.

On the other hand, legal (rational) legitimization of authority is based on the belief that obedience arises from the law. The leader's position is precisely defined by the law. Legitimization in this context relies on a *rational basis – resting on trust in the legality of established rules and the authority vested in those who issue commands under such rules* (Eisenstadt, 1968, p. 46).

Beetham (1991, p. 20) indicated that leadership could address the inherent human limitations of charismatic legitimization by establishing a brand dynasty, where its heirs embody the brand's personality, defined through reference to its founder. Authority legitimized through charisma can indeed

serve as a genuine source of power. On the other hand, legal (rational) legitimization of authority is based on the belief that obedience arises from the law. The leader's position is precisely defined by the law. Different forms of power legitimization exist depending on political systems. One of the most prevalent types of political systems is authoritarianism, which holds an intermediate position between totalitarianism and democracy.

Authoritarian regimes may seek legitimization not only through force but also through human means. Throughout millennia, they have primarily relied on traditional and charismatic methods of obtaining legitimacy. In the 20th century, autocrats used nationalist ideology to justify their legitimacy. Most historically known authoritarian regimes justified their existence by claiming the necessity of liberation.

In the past few decades, authoritarian political systems have often exploited some democratic institutions, such as elections, to gain respect in the eyes of the international community and avoid international sanctions. It is worth noting that elections without competition or with semi-competition were organized by authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes in various countries, including Russia. The distinguishing feature of such elections is limited or apparent competitiveness, where all candidates are amenable to the ruling powers, as well as their full or partial control over official election results. Authorities can secure election victories for themselves in various ways – by monopolizing media outlets, selectively nominating candidates, or manipulating voting results.

Over the last few decades, authoritarian political systems have increasingly taken on transitional characteristics and, though formally, moved toward democracy.

Unlike non-democratic political systems, where ideology plays a significant role in legitimizing power, democratic systems primarily rely on free elections as the key factor in legitimizing authority. The foundation of such an approach is the belief that the people are the source of power. Above that democratization of social life perceived as the basis of legitimizing authority mainly assumes that: 1) those in power act in accordance with the rule of law, which is not breached or violated, 2) citizens can freely establish their own independent organizations, known as non-governmental organizations,



as per their needs and aspirations, as they are independent from the state (from the power system). Such rules and laws may arise from constitutional law. Without such regulations, a democratic society cannot exist, as they form the foundation of democratic order.

### ***THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LEGITIMIZATION OF AUTHORITY***

There is no doubt that radical social actions, such as revolution or coup d'état, serve as evidence of the breakdown of legitimacy. Conversely, given the diverse range of political systems worldwide, we may come across various principles of legitimization that seek to establish and uphold authority. The reasons for the legitimization of authority are as follows (Beetham, 1991, pp. 26–39): it has consequences for people's behavior and provides subordinates with moral grounds for cooperation and obedience. The acceptance of legitimate authority empowers those in positions of power to expect obedience from their subordinates, even when there might be disagreements regarding specific laws or instructions. Conversely, subordinates are bound by an obligation to obey. The concept of legitimacy is morally relevant to authority, although not all forms of authority necessarily require it in practice. In every society, the regulation of access to power and its exercise is essential, and this organization is governed by social rules that necessitate legitimization. Legitimization or the establishment of legitimacy for power is vital in explaining obedience, as it imposes a duty on individuals to comply and provides grounds or reasons for their obedience. The significance of authority legitimization becomes especially apparent when it is undermined or absent. In such instances, authority may not collapse entirely, and obedience may still be maintained through incentives or sanctions. However, coercive measures become more prominent, and a power system reliant solely on force as its defense is susceptible to rapid collapse, especially if coercion proves inadequate or if the people perceive a lack of will from those in power to enforce it. When rulers must focus predominantly on maintaining order, their capacity to achieve other objectives diminishes, making their power less effective. Furthermore, legitimization is essential not only for maintaining order but also for the level of cooperation and the quality of accomplishments that rulers can ensure from subordinates.

According to Beetham, there are external and internal sources of legitimization rooted in clearly distinguishable types of belief systems, each with its own appropriate interpretations and discourse. The most common internal source of legitimization he perceived at that time was the people. This source provides a broad foundation for legitimacy within the political sphere, setting a precedent for the wider society's rules to derive their own legitimacy through a legislative process that is not bound by traditional constraints. (...) The most profound social transformations are characterized by changes in the belief systems that identify where legitimacy for societal power structures comes from: moving from religious to secular; from external to internal and particular; from the society of yesteryears to the contemporary society (Beetham, 1991, p. 75).

## **LEGITIMIZATION OF AUTHORITY ACCORDING TO JEAN D'ASPREMONT**

The legitimization of authority has a strong correlation with democratic principles. Democracy can only function when it has the support of the society. Therefore, the legitimization of authority is particularly crucial during periods of political transformation, when a regime evolves towards a democratic form of governance. This is why legitimization is such a pivotal issue in former communist countries that are on the path to democracy.

D'Aspremont rightly argues that states are legal entities that act through their governments. However, in reality, governments are short-lived bodies, as their existence primarily depends on the form of the political system and the internal stability of the state. Ultimately, even apart from the human lifespan, representatives of legal entities, including the government, are often replaced by others. According to d'Aspremont (2006), frequent changes of personnel in the government suggest the need to formulate criteria determining who is authorized to speak and act on behalf of the state. The author maintains that defining the representative of each state in the international arena is at the core of the concept of legitimization in international relations. Only a legitimate (legitimized) authority (government) is entitled to speak and act on behalf of the state. This means that legitimization grants authority the power to act and

speak on behalf of the state. According to d'Aspremont (2006, pp. 878–879), the legitimacy of governments lacks objective standards, stemming instead from the subjective nature of its evaluation. This means, on one hand, that each state has the freedom to decide on the legal capacity of an entity claiming to represent another state in their bilateral relations. On the other hand, it implies that each state can assess the legitimacy of a foreign government based on its own chosen criteria. This gives rise to controversies regarding the legitimacy of governments. Controversies arise particularly when the elected government does not respect the essential elements of democracy. Countries with such governments, as mentioned above, are referred to as intolerant democracies. Such forms of government have existed for a long time, and after the end of the Cold War, they were tolerated in international relations because it was believed that their disregard for the genuine elements of democracy was temporary and that they needed time for a transitional stage (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 879). Some of these intolerant democracies have been replaced by fully mature democracies, but others have persisted and even strengthened. Additionally, new intolerant democracies have emerged, especially in the Middle East.

In international relations, there are situations where a particular government is considered legitimate by some states and illegitimate by others. Intolerant democracies possess certain democratic features, as their governments often go through an electoral process, which grants them a form of legitimacy. However, they cannot be considered fully legitimate due to their lack of respect for certain essential elements of democracy.

According to d'Aspremont, legitimacy can play different roles depending on its type. Thus, it is reasonable to distinguish between *legitimacy by origin* and *legitimacy by performance*. The former refers to the source of authority, while the latter relates to how authority is exercised. Each type of legitimacy serves a different purpose. Following this division, the author makes a distinction between the qualification and disqualification of governments. According to d'Aspremont (2006, pp. 880–881), when a new government receives international acknowledgment and its representatives are officially recognized by international bodies, it is deemed a legitimate authority with the right to represent and make decisions for the nation. D'Aspremont also argues that legitimization can serve a disqualifying function when a government representative, previously seen

as legitimate and authorized to act and speak on behalf of the state, becomes disqualified and ceases to be the representative of that state, or in business terms, a company loses recognition. According to the author, this illustrates how the test for legitimacy by origin has been limited to a qualifying role and the test for legitimacy by performance has been largely confined to a disqualifying role. The author deduces from this that for intolerant democracies to endure, there must be a considerable enlargement of the role that performance-based legitimacy plays in disqualifying them (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 881). As mentioned earlier, d'Aspremont introduces a distinction between legitimization related to the source of authority (legitimization by origin) and legitimization concerning the actions of authority (legitimization by performance). However, he notes that this differentiation is relevant only in relation to the government's legitimization. *The legitimacy of origin is a tool to assess the origin of the government (coup, dynasty, elections, etc.), while the legitimacy of exercise permits evaluation of the way in which the government exerts its power* (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 882). Although the leaders govern both in the political and economic environment, there is a distinction in the scope of their leadership. In business, an example of legitimization from both sources is the activity of Elizabeth Holmes, President, and CEO at Theranos, a biotechnology company, whose valuation surged after Holmes claimed to have revolutionized blood testing by developing methods that required only very small blood samples, such as a finger prick. In 2015, the company was valued at \$4.5 billion (Forbes, 2023). However, after reports of potential fraud, the valuation was updated to zero. What influenced Holmes' legitimization? One factor was her dressing style – wearing black turtlenecks, which drew comparisons to Steve Jobs, and the fact that she dropped out of Stanford University to develop her own company. Ultimately, the youngest and wealthiest female billionaire in the United States, whose father was a former Enron executive, was sentenced to several years in prison.

Regarding the distinct functions performed by the two types of legitimization mentioned above, d'Aspremont writes that legitimization based on actions is avoided in situations where a decision about the government's qualification must be made. This is because evaluating the legitimization of government actions requires that the government has been in power for a certain period. In cases of unconstitutional changes of government or controversies related

to accreditations, government actions must also be considered. Thus, the more suitable evaluation for government legitimization is believed to lie in the source of power, which can be promptly appraised. Given that the origin of legitimization requires a free and fair electoral process, other countries, if they need to make quick decisions, rely on the relationships of election monitoring missions sent by international organizations. In other words, free and fair elections are more easily graspable than the actual elements of democracy. According to d'Aspremont, this is the reason why legitimization based on actions did not matter much in qualifying governments, which relied almost exclusively on legitimization based on origin.

In his considerations, d'Aspremont proposes the thesis that the disqualifying role of legitimization based on actions will dramatically increase due to the recognition of governments and the accreditation of their delegates in international organizations because of the existence of intolerant democracies. The author believes that intolerant democracies will first prompt states to consider their recognition policies, especially concerning governments and delegates at international organizations. Legitimization based on actions can influence recognition in two ways. Firstly, it may lead states not to recognize a government whose expected policy is likely to be contrary to the actual elements of democracy. Secondly, if the expected actions of the government do not deter states from recognition, further actions by those authorities that contradict human rights will lead to the withdrawal of prior recognition. The author acknowledges that the withdrawal of recognition is currently extremely rare in practice and cites the sole such case, i.e., Taiwan. Given that the legitimacy of governments is evaluated in a narrow set of circumstances, nations possess a restricted array of strategies to address the challenges posed by illiberal democracies. Recognition and accreditation stand out as two such strategies, and it would be unexpected if they weren't utilized to combat the continuation of illiberal democracies. Consequently, it is probable that we will see an increase in the use of legitimacy assessments based on actions, through the processes of recognizing governments and accrediting representatives in international bodies (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 916).

The writer presents the notions of external legitimization and internal legitimization. He also emphasizes that the distinction between legitimization

based on origin and legitimization based on actions applies only to the external legitimization of the government and does not apply to its internal legitimization. Government legitimization can be evaluated from two distinct angles. One perspective focuses on the government's internal legitimization – its perception among the populace – while the other concerns its external legitimization, or how it is viewed by other nations. Internal legitimization typically concerns itself with attaining social and distributive justice, highlighting the government's role in serving the people's interests (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 882). However, internal legitimization is not very relevant for assessing the government in international law because it pertains only to how the government's legitimization is perceived by other international authorities.

Legitimization based on origin and legitimization based on actions have played a significant role during different periods of international law. According to d'Aspremont, following the ideas developed by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, further amplified by the American and French revolutions, legitimization became associated with the will of the people. This found official expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, stating that the will of the people is the ultimate source of government legitimization.

It is noteworthy that after World War II, the widely shared belief gained recognition that the only acceptable type of regime (political system) that gained broad support is democracy. The idea of democracy stems from the conviction that democracy contributes to peace and prosperity. Hence, democracy holds a dominant character among the states of the contemporary world. The global spread of democracy is evident. New states in Eastern Europe that emerged on the political stage adopted democratic institutions and joined the family of democratic states. In some of them, the democratic process has made significant progress, while in others, democratization is slower or has even stalled. The same applies to countries on other continents, where intolerant democracies exhibit certain democratic features, such as electoral processes.

In today's world, there are international organizations that bind their members to fundamental democratic principles. The most important ones include: the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In practice, democracy simply involves holding free elections, which are considered democratic when they are representative, fair, and periodic. This idea, where decisions are made based on the will of the people, has become the basis for condemning and applying sanctions in the event of any coup against a democratically elected government. Therefore, *since the end of the Cold War, therefore, the external legitimacy of an authority has come to depend almost entirely upon its democratic character* (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 887).

D'Aspremont emphasizes that an authentic democracy requires concrete essentials like crucial political freedoms, civil rights, and adherence to the rule of law (d'Aspremont, 2006, pp. 896–897). He argues that without citizens' political rights, a truly free electoral process cannot exist, underlining the importance of freedoms such as expression, assembly, thought, and press. These freedoms are inherent democratic rights essential to democratic governance. It is clear that authentic power is fully legitimized exclusively within democratic societies. Democracy allows power to be legitimized according to the rule of law. Since the end of the Cold War, democracy has become the criterion for legitimizing any new government.

The authors point out that the procedural understanding of democracy focuses on the source of power while overlooking how it's wielded, leading to a neglect of the difference between legitimacy based on origin and on action. This oversight fails to address issues with enduring illiberal democracies, suggesting a need to emphasize the importance of action-based legitimacy. In this view, a government gains legitimacy through the people's will via free and fair elections, underscoring elections as foundational to democratic governance. Thus, d'Aspremont emphasizes that democracy also entails adherence to the rule of law.

D'Aspremont argues that in cases where only one type of legitimacy (by origin or by action) is taken into account, the legitimacy test turns out to be unsatisfactory, especially in intolerant democracies. The most common situation where the legitimacy of a government is tested occurs when there is a change of government outside the normal constitutional procedure. In such cases, each government must determine somehow who will be considered representatives of the state. Recognizing a foreign government triggers the legitimacy test – either by expressing recognition or by establishing diplomatic

relations. If the authority is deemed illegitimate, it will not be considered as representing the state it comes from.

Since the end of the Cold War, governments that have overthrown democratically elected governments, as was the case in several African countries, have almost always been denied recognition. Occasionally, authorities that staged coups were recognized, but only those that committed to holding elections within a reasonable timeframe or overthrew an autocratic regime. Some of these countries gained recognition by proclaiming their commitment to democracy. The author also believes that in the era of democracy, legitimizing a democratically elected government often compensates for its lack of effectiveness, even though the effectiveness of the government is a normally prerequisite for its international recognition.

According to d'Aspremont, in the above examples, the legitimacy test focused on legitimacy by origin and not on the way in which the government exercises power. This means that when the issue of government recognition arises, little attention is given to legitimacy by action. D'Aspremont argues that *this lack of attention to the legitimacy of exercise has not been without problems in regards to illiberal democracies* (d'Aspremont, 2006, p. 903).

In an exceptional case, South Africa's delegates were refused accreditation at the United Nations because of the country's discriminatory and racist policies, highlighting how power was used. D'Aspremont notes that in armed interventions by invitation, both the legitimacy of the government's origin and its actions were considered, but the emphasis was more on the legitimacy of actions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Legitimization is a complex concept involving the recognition of authority's legality, adherence to laws, and its justification within legal frameworks. It often pertains to state leadership and business authority, sometimes seen as a measure of actions aligning with societal standards, norms, and values. Legitimization involves endorsing a political system suited to a society, where leaders gain legitimacy through democratic elections or appointments but can lose it due to mismanagement or illegal activities, as indicated



by public opinion in democratic settings. An illegitimate power grab can, however, become legitimized if it leads to democratic reforms.

This paper references the work of David Beetham, who explored the foundational aspects of authority legitimization and its relationship with authority, and Jean d'Aspremont, who distinguished between the legitimacy of origin and action in government legitimization. Legitimization intersects sociology, political theory, and philosophy, holding significant relevance in international relations. The international community's recognition, based on democratic standards, affects a state's international organization membership, foreign cooperation, and its socio-economic and cultural development trajectory.

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