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Classifying political regimes revisited: legitimation and durability

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This article presents a new typology and a new dataset of political regimes (1946–2010). The classification presented is based, in theoretical terms, on the distinctive patterns of legitimation exhibited by the political regimes. To demonstrate the usefulness of the classification, I explore the extent to which the classification and its theoretical foundation, namely the pattern of legitimation, helps to explain the durability of different political regime types. I compare the results and explanations with those of Geddes and Hadenius and Teorell in order to clarify the differences made by the use of the presented classification.

Keywords: political regimes; typology; legitimation; autocracy; monarchy; military regimes; totalitarian regimes; durability

Introduction

In this article, a new classification and a new dataset of political regimes (1946–2010) are presented.[1] A political regime is a set of rules that identifies: who has access to power; who is allowed to select the government; and under what conditions and limitations authority is exercised.[2] The use of conceptual typologies in comparative politics is straightforward.[3] Whenever data is not continuous, typologies have a necessary role, as a way of categorizing causes and effects.[4] Many research questions in comparative politics address whether a particular political regime type makes a difference. Is, for instance, a one-party regime more durable than a military one? Is democracy better for economic growth than all forms of autocracy? If we want to answer such questions, a classification of political regimes is preferable, involving graded measures of democracy. Yet, all graded measures of democracy, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Freedom House or Polity IV, merely tell us to what degree a political regime appears democratic. However, the degree of democratization does not capture fundamental qualitative differences between political regimes apparently exhibiting the same degree of democratization.

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The article is structured as follows. First, the original contribution of the classification is outlined. Second, a brief overview of the classification is presented. Third, the types of the classification are introduced in more detail. Fourth, the extent to which the classification and its theoretical foundation, namely the pattern of legitimation, help to improve our knowledge on the longevity of political regime types is explored. The final section summarizes the findings of the article.

What's new?

The presented classification takes its cue from the path-breaking work of Barbara Geddes.[5] Geddes distinguished political regimes based on multi-dimensional qualitative benchmarks established by case and area studies. She basically differentiated between party-based regimes, military regimes and personalist regimes. Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell introduced a modified version, which added to Geddes' original classification, adding a distinction between one-party autocracies and multiparty autocracies, and abolishing the category of personalist regimes.[6] Yet, while the contributions of Geddes and Hadenius and Teorell are very useful, there is room for further improvement.

First, I try to provide a thorough theoretical foundation for the classification of political regimes. The theoretical foundation presented in this article is not meant to replace the seminal game-theory approach of politics in autocratic regimes by Geddes, but to complement and augment it. Geddes sought to use a game-theory approach to address the question of what kind of incentives actors face in different kinds of political regimes. The theoretical foundation of the classification instead just tries to answer the question of what constitutes and defines the political regime types. Geddes claimed to differentiate political regimes by the question of "who rules". However, this seemingly simple question is very hard to answer. Geddes named three basic regime types, namely military, party-based and personalist authoritarian regimes.[7] However, according to Geddes the person at the top of a personalist regime can be a military person, a party member or a civilian outside a party. So her distinction is not simply about "who rules". Geddes also considered how rule is exercised, namely if the party or the military actually constrains the power of the ruler. Hadenius and Teorell claimed to distinguish regimes by the different modes of political power maintenance: hereditary succession or lineage (in monarchies); the actual or threatened use of military force (in military regimes); and popular elections (in party regimes).[8] However, this simple distinction does not work. It is not true that the usual mode of power maintenance in party autocracies is popular election. Moreover, in all kinds of autocracies one pillar of power maintenance is the actual or threatened use of military force.

Following Max Weber,[9] I argue that we find a historical and theoretical informed answer to the question "What constitutes and defines a political regime type?" in its pattern of legitimation.[10] This is because legitimation forms the theoretical "foundation of [...] governmental power";[11] it "contributes in both constituting it and defining it",[12] even in the absence of widespread popular

legitimacy.[13] Legitimation implies the basic organization of the political regime, namely who has *justified* access to power; who is *justified* to select the government; and how and under what conditions and limitations rule is *legitimately* exercised. I argue, again with Max Weber, that according to the kind of legitimation of the political regime, "the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff developed to guarantee it, and the mode of exercising authority, will all differ fundamentally".[14] It is assumed that what both members of the elite and the ordinary people believe about the ruler's right to rule are important reasons why a political regime is able to survive for a long period of time. To rely only on repression and co-optation would result, as Weber already noted, in a "relatively unstable situation".[15] Claims about legitimacy are not merely seen as elite rationalizations of structures of rules chosen for other reasons. The justification of power is usually not merely window-dressing by rulers. To be a pillar of the stability and effectiveness of a political regime, the legitimation of the political regime must be credible. To make a credible claim, the rulers should believe in their legitimization.[16] The justification of a political regime is the source of path dependence. "Critical junctures" in a country's history emerge whenever a political regime's justification is challenged by the elites and/or the population and/or the rulers no longer believe in the justification of the old political game.[17] Current examples are provided by the wave of revolutionary protests in the Arab world.

The proposed approach is only concerned with the general patterns of legitimation. It does not require a discursive strategy to comprehensively identify any detail of the legitimation of rulers. Moreover, at least institutionalized regimes are not simply justified in words. In the case of liberal democracies, political regimes are legitimized by ongoing institutionalized procedures.[18] In this sense, free and fair elections are not only an *institutional feature* of a liberal democracy, but they are the *necessary* procedural justification of the elected to rule.[19] Hence, in the absence of free and fair elections, a political regime is de facto not a liberal democracy.

Before checking how the political regime is legitimized, we need to verify who actually rules a country in order to classify a political regime properly. There are, for instance, monarchs as ceremonial heads of state in liberal democracies that do not rule the country they represent, such as in present-day Great Britain or Sweden. On the other hand, there are rulers like Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled Libya officially only from 1969 to 1977. However, after he officially stepped down in 1977, he continued to rule unofficially until 2011.

Second, I argue that at least a separate category for communist regimes is essential in a historical and theoretical perspective. Until fairly recently, one-third of the world's population had lived under communist rule for more than four decades, and even today around one-sixth of humanity still lives under communist regimes.[20] While Hadenius and Teorell explicitly contended that the category of totalitarianism "grew obsolete",[21] I agree with the vast majority of political scientists that ideocratic/totalitarian communist regimes with a distinguishable logic of rule exist(ed).[22] Nevertheless, a modification of the concept

of totalitarianism is necessary since it is too narrow. Given that the term "totalitarianism" in itself is controversial, I replace it with the more appropriate label "ideocracy".[23] In ideocracies the exercise of power is justified by a utopian and totalitarian ideology that is defined as the common interest of the governing and the governed.[24]

Third, Geddes focused in her original article on types of authoritarian regimes and did not deal with the important problem of drawing a proper line between liberal democracies and authoritarian party regimes with multiparty elections. Hadenius and Teorell emphasized rightly that in order to develop a typology of political regimes we first need a "qualitative (dichotomous) distinction between democracy and autocracy".[25] They used the "mean of each country's Freedom House and Polity scores converted to a scale from 0 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic)",[26] and distinguished democracies from autocracies at a score of 7.5. However, any score on the scale by Hadenius and Teorell could be based on very different combinations of measured features of Polity IV and Freedom House. It is impossible to substantiate why exactly a threshold of 7.5 – instead of 6.5, 7, 8 or even 8.5 – should distinguish democracy from autocracy. Hence, Hadenius and Teorell seem to have applied an arbitrary score.[27]

In the proposed classification, a clear line is drawn between democracy and autocracy based on the qualitative criteria of whether executive and legislative elections are free and fair, and whether the power of the ruler is actually constrained by an elected legislature and an independent jurisdiction.[28] To be called free and fair "the government must not use its institutional powers to interfere with, or unduly influence the outcome of the electoral process".[29] If civil rights are restricted, elections are not free and fair. There are rather different kinds of norm violations like "unfairness: restricting access to media and money", "formal disenfranchisement", "electoral fraud" and "reversal: preventing victors from taking office".[30] Substantial limitations to executive authority are present if, for instance, the "legislature often modifies or defeats executive proposals for action",[31] and if either the legislature "initiates much or most important legislation" or the head of government only stays in office as long as no majority in the legislature votes him out. This clear cut qualitative line is preferable to the alternation rule suggested by Cheibub et al.[32] The application of that rule would mean that once an alternation of power occurs, a regime would be counted as a democracy, even before the switch of power. This retroactive reclassification is suboptimal. Mexico, for instance, was indeed an electoral autocracy until 2000. We should not reclassify it for the previous period because the presidential elections of 2000 were free and fair and an alternation of power occurred. South Africa and Botswana are conversely liberal democracies even if no alternation occurred, because the executive and legislative elections are free and fair and the legislature, as well as an independent judicial system, actually constrains the power of the executive.

Fourth, I agree with Geddes that we need a separate category for personalist regimes, but the one created by Geddes is too broad and its boundaries are unclear. We should, for instance, not label regimes with regular popular multi-candidate elections for the head of government like post-communist Russia as a personalist regime, but restrict the label to regimes without regular popular elections of the head of government and without institutions that select or control a (non-monarchic) ruler.

The following point was already introduced by Hadenius and Teorell: a separate regime type for electoral autocracies is needed. This is where opposition parties are allowed, for instance in today's Russia. By allowing opposition parties in parliament, they operate under an almost entirely separate set of rules compared to one-party autocracies. The rules of the game in an electoral autocracy have to be structured in a way that at least one opposition party is willing to take part in elections. However, regimes in this group – see below for examples – are not procedurally legitimized, like liberal democracies, by free and fair elections and effective constraints of the ruler.

Electoral autocracies constitute by far the most common regime type today.[33] A typology that does not include this regime type is not able to address research questions in the qualitative literature on electoral autocracies.[34] For instance, it would be impossible to test if the following hypothesis is true: "De jure competitive elections provide a set of institutions, rights, and processes stacking up incentives and costs in ways that tend to further democratization".[35] The confirmation of this hypothesis exactly was at the core of the improvement of the typology of Geddes' by Hadenius and Teorell.

In the next parts of the paper, I present an overview of the classification based on the pattern of legitimation and introduce the types of the classification in more detail. I will then show that the classification adds important insights to our knowledge on regime durability.

Overview of the classification

There are two "strong" ways rulers justify why the people should obey them: by the claim that they have a God-given natural, historical or religious right to rule or that they have a God-given natural, historical or religious purpose to rule; or by procedures that guarantee that the people are able to select and control the rulers themselves. There are only two regime types – communist ideocracy and (traditional) monarchy – in which justification relies on a God-given natural/historical law outside the political regime. This is a very strong legitimation, with a clear plan of how society should be structured. Communist regimes and monarchies therefore establish a fixed ruling class – the communist party elite or the aristocracy – which are united by a strong fear that they would dramatically lose their privileges following a regime change.

In stark contrast to these ideal regime types, citizens in a liberal democracy are asked to recognize the right of public authority to issue commands, because they

have "participated in the *process* wherein those commands originated",[36] namely that they have elected a government and a parliament, which jointly rule the country, in free and fair elections.

A third and weaker kind of justification of authority is to claim that the ruler is selected and controlled by a rational-legal institution that knows the "common interest" of the people and acts in the best interest of the people. However, the lack of an ideology that delivers a plan to reshape society and is able to create ideological believers means that the party in non-ideocratic one-party regimes is solely dependent on good policy performance. Table 1 provides the reader with a "checklist" for the patterns of legitimation reviewed above. Usually military regimes not only lack a clear vision of their rule, but also lack a justification to rule permanently. The military is not designed to govern the country in normal times. It has to justify its temporary rule with an internal or external threat to the country. Usually military regimes claim shortly after a successful coup that they will soon return authority to civilians. This is the reason why the logic of politics in military regimes noted by Geddes holds. Unlike in party-based regimes, it is not the basic interest of the military to govern the country. Rather, the military as an institution wants to avoid a civil war in which soldiers fight each other. That is why military regimes, after some time, often voluntarily hand over power to civilian governments.[37] However, if the military does not hand over power voluntarily after a rather short time, there tend to be growing popular and external demands, such as in Chile towards the end of Augusto Pinochet's rule (1973–1990), to do so.

It is plausible to suggest that many people usually only voluntarily accept the rule of one party or the military as long as these regimes perform well. One-party regimes and electoral autocracies should therefore be especially vulnerable to bad economic performance. Military rule should also be vulnerable not only to poor economic performance, but also to less than satisfactory outcomes in terms of internal and external security. For instance, in 1981 there was widespread civil unrest in Argentina because of a devastating economic crisis. The junta then tried to mobilize patriotic feelings by occupying the Falklands. However, after the Falkland War against the United Kingdom was lost, the junta had to return authority to civilians.

While electoral autocracies lack, compared to liberal democracies, the strong procedural legitimation that justifies why people should obey the authority, personalist autocracies lack, compared to monarchies, the legitimation of the ruler by an established God-given, natural or historic legitimation that is shared by an institutionalized ruling class (the aristocracy). Because these regime types lack a strong pattern of legitimation, they should typically be less durable than monarchies and liberal democracies.

Regime types according to the classification

In the last section, I presented a brief overview of the rough pattern of legitimation in the types of the classification. In this section, I will introduce the regime types in more detail.

Table 1. Patterns of legitimation in political regime types.

			By procedures to select and control the ruler directly by the people			
Legitimation of actual ruler(s)	By a dignified source outside the political regime	By selection and control of an institution that protects the popular will	Multiparty legislative elections	Multi-candidate election of ruler	Fairness of elections	Executive constraints
Liberal democracy	*No*	No	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Electoral autocracy	*No*	No	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*
Communist ideocracy	*Yes (communist purpose)*	*Yes (communist elite)*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
One-party autocracy	*No (not ideocratic)*	*Yes (party)*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*
Monarchy	*Yes (monarchic origin)*	*No*	Maybe	*No*	*No*	*No*
Military regime	*No*	*Yes (military)*	Maybe	*No*	*No*	*No*
Personalist autocracy	*Maybe, but not established (not monarchic)*	*No (neither party nor military)*	*No*	*No*	*No*	*No*

Note: The questions which were used to code the political regime types in the data set are printed in italics.

Liberal democracy

The "Federalist Papers", written by key members of the political elite of the first modern democracy, the United States, justified liberal democracy by multiparty elections, liberty and executive constraints.[38] Free and fair elections are, in this sense, not only an institutional feature of liberal democracy, but also the procedural legitimation of the rulers to rule and the legislators to legislate.

All multiparty regimes, liberal democracies as well as electoral autocracies, need to fulfil three criteria to legitimize procedurally: the ruler has to be directly or indirectly legitimated by popular election; a legislature is elected by the people; and there is at least one real opposition party or opposition candidate (outside a regime bloc) for which people can vote in legislative and executive elections.[39] What distinguishes liberal democracies from electoral autocracies is that the executive and legislative elections are free and fair and the power of the ruler is effectively constrained by the legislature.

Electoral autocracy

Similar to liberal democracies, electoral autocracies legitimize themselves by the procedures of legislative multiparty elections and executive multi-candidate elections. Electoral autocracies allow only "controlled multipartyism".[40] Alternation – by executive elections and without pressure – "cannot occur since the possibility of a rotation in power is not even envisaged".[41] While there is a clear negative way to distinguish electoral autocracy from liberal democracy by the procedural legitimation of democracies, there is no coherent legitimation of electoral autocracy as a type that distinguishes it positively from a liberal democracy. To legitimate themselves, many electoral autocracies either directly refute that liberty and executive constraints bestow wellbeing to the society, or they argue that because of some important reason(s) – most often security – it is not possible to provide such liberties. Perhaps the most elaborate justification of an electoral autocracy, "communitarianism",[42] comes from Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore. He states that in a communitarian society "the interests of society take precedence over that of the individual".[43] However, quite often there are only vague or no explicit official justifications as to why the regime does not fulfil the procedural legitimation of a liberal democracy. The lack of a common original pattern of legitimation of electoral autocracy is exactly what makes electoral autocracy and liberal democracy hard to distinguish from each other. In addition to that, I argue that it is the lack of a sound original pattern of legitimation that helps explain why electoral autocracy is not a very durable regime type and often transits to a liberal democracy, such as in Madagascar (1991/1992), Kenya (2002) or South Korea (1998).[44] Moreover, the border between liberal democracy and electoral autocracy is easily crossed in both directions. There are also a considerable number of regime changes from liberal democracy to electoral autocracy, such as in Venezuela under President Hugo Chávez.

Communist ideocracy

Ideocratic regimes claim that they fulfil the laws of nature, history or God and pave the way to a utopian future. Their source of legitimation lies in the future, beyond the procedures of the political regime itself. Ideocratic regimes "cannot be compatible with 'pluralism'" and claim "cognitive infallibility".[45,46] What distinguishes ideocracies from all other political regime types is that the rulers not only claim to have a right to rule, but by virtue of their ideology also assert the right to control and reshape all aspects of society.[47] There are three basic variants of ideocracies: communist, national-socialist/fascist and Islamist.[48]

A regime justifies itself as a communist ideocracy by claiming to be a socialist/communist regime with a Marxist–Leninist ideology. The concrete ideological legitimation of a communist regime is that it takes the necessary measures to build a utopian classless communist society. In communist regimes, the "theory of history – not popular approval – constitute[s] the permanent core of communist claims to legitimacy".[49] The truth of the communist ideology is the precondition for the communist leadership monopoly.

One-party autocracy

A country justifies itself as a one-party autocracy if it is *de jure* a single party regime, but the regime party has no utopian ideology. As in ideocracies, power is usually justified as reflecting the common interest of the ruling and the ruled. In this concept, electoral competition of political alternatives is not only unnecessary, but opposition is illegitimate. We might call this view a monist vision of popular sovereignty or a "one-party ideology".[50] However, different from an ideocracy, a non-ideocratic one-party autocracy has only a vague political vision justifying the exclusion of all political alternatives. This is apparent, for instance, in the following statement from Ahmed Sékou Touré, the ruler of Guinea from 1958 to 1984, who justified one-party rule in the following way:

> [I]f it is true that the citizens of a nation are equal, one could not work to protect the life and interests of some to the detriment of others [. . .] That is why national democracy and the one-party system are a form of social organization dialectically superior in efficiency and social utility to the multi-party system.[51]

This category also contains regimes in which the ruling regime bans all opposition parties. These regimes fall into this category because they lack the procedural legitimation of an electoral autocracy. The lack of a sound legitimation should, on average, make non-ideocratic one-party autocracy less resilient than communist ideocracy. The regime party in non-communist one-party regimes is notoriously in danger of becoming a vehicle for big man rule.

Military regime

There is no common procedural justification of military regimes. A military regime claims that it is justified to lay down "whatever regulations, norms, and

instructions" the military junta thinks fit "for the attainment of [its] objectives aimed at the common good and the maximum patriotic interest".[52] A military regime might allow parties or not, it might hold elections or not. Indeed, there is not even a clear pattern of how the military as an institution selects and controls the rulers. This is what makes military regimes sometimes hard to distinguish from personalist regimes.

However, to appear as a rational-legal military regime and not as a regime of armed bandits, the military as an institution has to select the ruler in some way and the military need to have a say in politics.[53] The country is either ruled by a junta of high-ranking military officers – in which civilian bureaucrats may play a role or not – or by a high-ranking military officer, who is selected by the military as the ruler.[54] What distinguishes a military regime from a personalist regime is that the larger part of the military backs the coup and there is a more or less professional military and bureaucracy with a rational-legal ethos. In less-developed countries there are lots of examples of small groups of soldiers staging a coup that is followed by a personalist regime. Examples of this phenomenon include General Idi Amin's seizure of power in Uganda in 1971 and the coup of middle-ranking officers like Jerry Rawlings in Ghana in 1981 or Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in 1983. These are not military regimes in the sense of this classification.

The vague justification of a military regime is that only the military – usually together with the bureaucracy – is able to save the nation as a rational apolitical arbiter of social conflict in a time of crisis; and the country is in a severe crisis.[55] A variant of the justification of military dictatorship is that the military claims to protect the regular civilian kind of government – be it a democracy (e.g. Chile, Fiji, Honduras) or a monarchy (e.g. Thailand) – or some elements of party rule, such as secularism (e.g. Turkey) against some "dangerous" forces, such as communists, Islamists, terrorists or separatist rebels. However, the common justification of a military regime does not provide a permanent justification for deviating from civilian rule. Usually, military regimes accept this stipulation and reassure the population that there will be a return to civil rule.[56] This is a fundamental difference between most military regimes and other types of political regimes, which claim to have a permanent justification to rule. Well-known examples of military regimes are the "National Reorganization Process" (1976–1983) in Argentina or the rule of the military junta and afterwards General Pinochet (commander of the army) in Chile, who was selected as president by the highest ranks of the military.

Monarchy

The common justification of a monarch to rule is that she/he has a God-given, natural or at least established historical right to rule because of his or her descent, regardless of the political outcome of his or her rule. Hence, a monarch legitimizes him or herself by a strong divine or natural source outside the political

regime.[57] The most exalted version of this justification stems from James VI, King of Scotland (from 1567 to 1625) and England (as James I from 1603 to 1625). He claimed that: "By the law of nature, the king becomes a natural father to all his lieges at his coronation".[58] The Islamic variant of the justification of monarchic rule does not differ much from the justification of Christian origin.[59] Current monarchs in the Islamic world justify themselves as descendants of the Prophet Mohammed in Jordan, as the "Commander of the Faithful" in Morocco, and as the "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" in Saudi Arabia.

The ruler in a monarchy refers to the monarchic legitimation of authority if the country simply officially claims that it is a monarchy with a governing monarch. This is not a tautology. It excludes all regimes in which a former king rules, not as a king but as a non-monarchic ruler. This is, for instance, the case with Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia (1960–1970, 1975–1976, 1991–1993).

Monarchy is not a regime without institutions. The power of the monarch relies on the institution of an established aristocracy. The aristocracy consists of the most powerful, usually related families of the country. The aristocracy as a fixed elite should be willing to defend the survival of the regime, because it has almost as much to lose as the monarch if the political regime changes.

Personalist autocracy

Personalist autocracies do not have a strong original justification, as monarchies do. Actually, they can only be negatively defined, in that they are (almost) "institutionless polities".[60] There are neither institutional nor traditional boundaries to the ruler's will. Personalist rule means that the ruler might change the rules of the political game arbitrarily. A personal autocracy gets established, for example, when one person becomes "president for life", such as in the case of Hastings Banda in Malawi (1971), Jean-Bédel Bokassa in the Central African Republic (1972), Francisco Macias in Equatorial Guinea (1973), Idi Amin in Uganda (1976), Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan (1999) or François (1964) and Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971) in Haiti. However, if there are only one-party candidate "elections" of the people and the regime party has no chance to nominate its candidate for presidency, as in Chad during the rule of Hissene Habre (1982–1990), the ruler is only self-selected and not selected by a party. Another way of establishing a personalist autocracy is a coup by a gang of soldiers, like 1971 in Uganda (Idi Amin) or 1981 in Ghana (Jerry Rawling).

A brief application of the classification: the durability of political regime types

In the last section, I introduced the classification in detail. In this section, I show that if the presented classification is employed it profoundly affects the conclusions one reaches about the consequences of political regime types on durability. The following results are drawn from a dataset collected by myself, which includes

Table 2. Average lifespan of political regimes 1946–2010.

Regime type	Kailitz 1946–2010	Hadenius and Teorell 1972–2008	Geddes 1946–2010
Monarchy	23.40	17.08	23.32
Personalist autocracy	12.58	Type not included	12.10 (category is broader)
Military autocracy	8.26	9.35	6.51
Communist ideocracy	19.74	Type not included	Type not included
One-party autocracy	8.37	10.47 (includes communist regimes)	19.78 (includes all non-democratic party regimes)
Electoral autocracy	11.07	8.10	Type not included
Liberal democracy	20.92	13.72	Type not included

Note: The average lifespan only counts the years political regimes existed during the period 1946–2010; $N = 9639$ (Kailitz); 6234 (Hadenius and Teorell); 7936 (Geddes).

all political regimes between 1946 and 2010. Table 2 summarizes the results on the average life span of the political regime types of the presented classification, the classification of Geddes, and the classification of Hadenius and Teorell. Regarding the results on the durability of political regimes, I confirm the finding of Geddes and Hadenius and Teorell that military regimes are more short-lived than party autocracies.[61] However, I add to Geddes' explanation that military regimes are more short-lived than other political regime types on average, simply because most military regimes do not claim to have a permanent justification to rule and promise to return to the barracks from the start. Many short-lived military regimes, such as in Turkey or Honduras, did not fail; they just kept the promise to return to the barracks. Actually, military regimes are in a legitimation dilemma: if they do fail to master the initial crisis, which legitimized the military coup, their rule loses its justification. However, the military also loses the justification to rule if it is successful in solving the crisis.

For the considerable time span of 1946 to 2010, I also confirm the finding of Hadenius and Teorell that monarchies are the most enduring regime type. Monarchies are, in fact, the most resilient political regime type in human history. I assert that one main reason is their strong justification of the political regime by a religious, natural or historical source outside the political regime. As long as people act as if power is really given to a specific dynasty by God or nature, then the people are strongly bound to obey the ruler by natural or religious law, because any opposition is treated as sacrilege. Moreover, it was a very successful historical gambit of monarchies to establish a privileged elite, called aristocracy, which is bound to the monarch as a fixed winning coalition. This created a specific political game. The aristocracy has as much to lose as the monarch himself/herself if the regime changes. Aristocrats may fight each other to become the monarch,

but they can be expected to stand united against any attempt to abolish the huge privileges bestowed upon them by aristocratic birthright. In the absence of strong pressure from outside the aristocratic elite, it is just not rational for the aristocracy to voluntarily open the gates for a mass of new potential members of the winning coalition.

By applying a much narrower coding of personalist autocracy, I find that personalist regimes are not very durable. The empirical result holds if Geddes' data is used. Geddes did not posit any hypothesis regarding the longevity of personalist regimes compared to other regime types. I suggest that personalist autocracies are, on average, far less durable than monarchies, liberal democracies and communist ideocracies, because they lack a comparable strong justification of the political regime. Different from monarchies, they also lack an established ruling elite that is devoted to defending the basic rules of the political game. As soon as the personalist autocrat cannot provide enough "booty" to provide to his personal gang, they will start to look for an alternative. Eventually the personalist autocrat is alone in his fight to survive.

This implies that Geddes' argument on personalist regimes is not convincing, especially that the "basic logic of the game is similar to that in single-party regimes" and "neither faction [of a personalist regime] would voluntarily leave office".[62] While it is true that "patrimonial ruling coalitions are unlikely to promote reform", it is also unlikely that they just voluntarily "sink or swim" with the personal autocrat.[63] This is so because all members of the ruling elite are continuously in danger of being excluded from the ruling coalition. Under these circumstances, for members of the current elite, it might be more likely to form part of the ruling regime after a regime change than without it. The more arbitrarily a personalist ruler rules the greater the chances that even the inner circle does not follow voluntarily but is forced to stay with the dictator only as a result of fear. Nevertheless, since it is true that a personal autocrat will cling to power by all means, he will try to coerce the ruling coalition into a last violent battle, like Muammar Gaddafi 2011 in Libya. However, the case of Libya proves that the gang around the leader is usually not at all voluntarily willing to sink with the ship. Key members of Gaddafi's personal clique, such as Abdul Fatah Younis and Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, resigned from their posts and defected to the rebel side.

In summary it can be said, therefore, that there are three durable regime types – monarchy, communist ideocracy, and liberal democracy – and four less durable regime types – personalist autocracy, military autocracy, one-party autocracy and electoral autocracy. Communist ideocracy is a resilient type of political regime. After liberal democracy finally won the legitimation battle over monarchy in most Western countries after World War I, communism became the only serious contender for power vis-à-vis liberal democracy. In the bipolar global order established after World War II, a third of the world's population lived under communist rule for more than four decades. The fall of the European Leninist regimes (1989/1991) does not contradict this and – again – we have to remember that one-sixth of humanity still lives under communist rule. The weak spot of a communist regime

is that it gets harder every year of its existence for the rulers to explain why communist utopia is still not in sight.[64] This is also the greatest danger for the present regime in China, which has now survived for 65 years.[65] All surviving communist regimes struggle hard to find a way to justify communist ideocracy in countries where even many party cadres probably do not believe in the communist ideology any more.

Enduring non-ideocratic party autocracies like Mexico or Singapore are exceptions. I hypothesize that party autocracies without an utopian ideology only gain public support in times of economic growth. If economic growth is delivered by the ruling party for a long time, such a party autocracy, like in Singapore, might even survive an economic downturn for some time. However, at the moment this is just a hypothesis which needs to be checked empirically.

My finding that non-ideocratic party regime types are not very durable on average is at odds with Geddes' hypothesis that, on average, party-based regimes last longest. The logic behind Geddes' hypothesis is that factions in a party autocracy form around policy differences and competition for leadership positions and that everyone is better off if all factions remain united and in office. In this scenario, neither faction "would voluntarily withdraw from office unless exogenous events changed the costs and benefits of cooperating with each other".[66] This hypothesis has influenced a great deal of studies. The view is prevailing that authoritarian parties are "stabilizing factors in dictatorships".[67]

I argue that only under the premise of an ideocratic party does Geddes' argument that everyone in the ruling party "is better off if all factions remain united and in office" hold.[68] This is why communist ideocracies, on average, are more durable than non-ideocratic one-party autocracies. The communist cadres form the equivalent of nobility which is – more or less – united by its strong utopian vision of rule. To become a member of the communist elite, one has to demonstrate commitment to the communist ideology and to the actual work of the communist party. In contrast to communist regimes, the members of a ruling party elite in a non-ideocratic party autocracy with vague programmes can rather easily turn to the opposition and become a member of a new winning coalition to maximize their personal gains. However, while electoral autocracies are less resilient than communist regimes and monarchies, they are more durable than one-party or military regimes.[69] The reason is that it is easier for the ruler(s) to co-opt the opposition when the opposition is legal and able to express its policy positions in a legislature. "Policy compromises require an institutional forum [...] where compromises can be hammered out without undue public scrutiny, and where the resulting agreements can be dressed in a legalistic form [...] and legislatures are ideally suited for the purpose".[70]

Conclusion

This article has aimed to improve the way we classify political regimes. First, I have tried to root the classification of political regimes theoretically in their

pattern of legitimation. Three kinds of political regimes, namely monarchy, communist ideocracy, and liberal democracy, exhibit a relatively strong pattern of legitimation compared to the other regime types. I argue that stable patterns of legitimation further the durability of these three regime types, relative to other regime types. However, this does not mean that monarchy and communist ideocracy are normatively more legitimate than other forms of autocracy. While monarchies and communist ideocracies are durable regime types, they lack more recent offspring and, as a consequence, have become very scarce. This reinforces the idea that to understand historical regime changes it does not suffice to apply a game-theory perspective; we also have to consider that the beliefs of actors change systematically over time. That means that while, for instance, most people in the world were long willing to accept – although not necessarily to believe – that they were legitimately ruled by a monarch and, as a result, had little or no say in political decision-making, this would not be the case today. Liberal democracy is, however, compared to all other political regimes, rather resilient against a change of beliefs, since it is rooted in a legitimation by procedures that guarantee that the people themselves select and control their ruler. I do not argue at all that Geddes' game-theory approach should be replaced by a legitimation perspective rooted in historical institutionalism,[71] but that the two perspectives complement each other.

Second, I have preserved a category for (communist) ideocracies. The distinction between ideocracies and non-ideocratic one-party autocracies makes not only theoretical but also empirical sense regarding regime longevity since both regime types have strikingly different lifespans. Only communist ideocracies have provided a vision of rule that was able to compete – for a considerable time – with the age-old vision of the God-given/natural rule of monarchs and the vision of a liberal and competitive regime, in which the people decide themselves by whom they are ruled.

Third, I have drawn the line between liberal democracy and electoral autocracy more precisely than in previous works on political regimes. Only multiparty regimes with free and fair elections and constraints on the executive should be considered liberal democracies.

Fourth, I have narrowed the category for personalist autocracy and defined it as an (almost) institutionless regime. Different from monarchy, personalist autocracy actually has no established pattern of legitimation.

Notes

1. The dataset and the code book are available from the author at request. An online appendix that includes a list of how all the country-years in the dataset are classified is provided as "supplementary content" alongside the article on the website of *Democratization*. I thank Jennifer Gandhi, Barbara Geddes, Sonja Grimm, Jeffrey Haynes, Patrick Köllner, Andreas Schedler, Daniel Stockemer, Thomas Richter and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments to improve the article.
2. See Munck, *Disaggregating Political Regime*; Skaaning, *Political Regimes*, 15.

3. Bailey, "Constructing"; Bailey, *Typologies and Taxonomies*; Collier, Laporte, and Seawright, "Typologies"; Elman, "Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies"; Hempel, "Typologische Methoden"; Kluge, *Empirisch begründete Typenbildung*; Lauth, "Typologien"; McKinney, *Constructive Typology.*
4. von Beyme, "Evolution of Comparative Politics," 33; Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 51.
5. Geddes, "Democratization."
6. Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways."
7. This type includes regimes which are *de jure* one-party and multiparty regimes: "In single-party regimes, access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one party, though other parties may legally exist and compete in elections", Geddes, "Democratization," 121.
8. Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways," 146.
9. Weber, *Economy and Society.*
10. On the significance of legitimation for political regimes, see: Barker, *Legitimating Identities*; Barker, *Political Legitimacy*; Beetham, *Legitimation of Power*; Burnell, "Autocratic Opening"; Denitsch, *Legitimation of Regimes*; Gaus, *Dynamics of Legitimation*; Gilley, "State Legitimacy"; Gilley, *Right to Rule*; Gilley and Holbig, *Search of Legitimacy*; Mayer, "Strategies of Justification"; Rigby and Fehér, *Political Legitimation in Communist States*; Schaar, *Legitimacy in the Modern State*; Sternberger, "Legitimacy".
11. Sternberger, "Legitimacy," 244.
12. Barker, *Legitimating Identities*.
13. Gaus, *Dynamics of Legitimation*, 12. See also Rigby and Fehér, *Political Legitimation in Communist States*; Weber, *Economy and Society.*
14. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 213.
15. Ibid. See also Gerschewski, "Three Pillars of Stability."
16. Barker, *Political Legitimacy*, 44; Sternberger, "Legitimacy," 244; Weber, *Economy and Society*, 953.
17. Mahoney, "Path Dependence," 509.
18. Niklas Luhmann called this legitimation by procedures. See Luhmann, *Legitimation durch Verfahren*.
19. See Luhmann, *Legitimation durch Verfahren*, 13f., 155–173.
20. I thank Jeff Haynes for this notification.
21. Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways," 144.
22. For example Brown, "Study"; Bunce, "Authoritarian and Totalitarian Systems"; Di Palma, "Legitimation," 51; Diamond, "Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism"; Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*; Merkel, "Totalitäre Regimes"; Sartori, "Totalitarianism"; Schedler, "Authoritarianism's Last Line," 76f; Snyder, "Beyond Electoral Authoritarianism," 225.
23. The concept of "ideocracy" was first introduced by Piekalkiewicz and Penn, *Politics of Ideocracy.* A formal theory of ideocracy was developed by Bernholz, "Ideocracy and Totalitarianism".
24. Compare with Backes, "Totalitarismus"; Beetham, *Legitimation of Power*, 181; Bernholz, "Ideocracy and Totalitarianism"; Drath, "Totalitarismus"; Fritze, *Verführung und Anpassung*; Kailitz, "Autokratie"; Patzelt, "Reality Construction"; Piekalkiewicz and Penn, *Politics of Ideocracy*, 25. This is originally one of the two basic conceptualizations of the notion of totalitarianism. The other approach sees those autocracies that rest mostly on repression and concentration of power as totalitarian. Even if these are entirely different concepts in most of the works on totalitarianism, the two conceptions flow into one concept. See, for example, Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. For the conceptual problems of the resulting ambiguous definition of totalitarianism, see Kailitz, "Autokratie," 213–223.

25. Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways," 145.
26. Ibid.
27. See Bogaards, "Where to Draw the Line?".
28. See Ulfelder, *"Observables".*
29. Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers, *Polity IV Project*, 83f.
30. Schedler, "Menu of Manipulation," 38.
31. Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers, *Polity IV Project*, 67f.
32. Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited".
33. Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism*.
34. Geddes, "Democratization"; Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*; Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development*.
35. Lindberg, "Democratization by Election," 9.
36. Barker, *Political Legitimacy*, 69 (my italics).
37. Geddes, "Democratization," 125f.
38. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *Federalist Papers*.
39. However, if the opposition boycotted a specific election this incidence is not considered to be a regime change from an electoral autocracy or liberal democracy to a one-party autocracy.
40. Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*, 95.
41. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 230.
42. Chua, *Communitarian Ideology*; Chua, *Communitarian Politics*.
43. Lee Kuan Yew, cited by Bell, "Communitarian Critique," 7.
44. See Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways."
45. Jong-il, *Historical Lesson*.
46. Di Palma, "Legitimation," 57f.
47. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*; Bernholz, "Ideocracy and Totalitarianism"; Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship*; Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*; Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*; Wintrobe, *Political Economy of Dictatorship*; Wintrobe, "Tinpot and the Totalitarian."
48. The only examples of Islamist ideocracies so far are those in Afghanistan, run by the Taliban between 1996–2001, and following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978–1979.
49. Di Palma, "Legitimation," 50.
50. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, 37–65.
51. Cited by Mayer, "Strategies of Justification," 162.
52. For example "Chile: The Reasons of the Junta 1973," 199.
53. To answer this seemingly simple question a vast amount of qualitative literature had to be consulted.
54. For a similar definition see Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships*, 166; Geddes, "Democratization," 124; Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, 172. To be clear, the criteria of a military regime is not already fulfilled if an active or even former military rules a country and/or got to power by a military coup. However, this is the coding criterion for military regimes in Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited" and Gandhi, *Political Institutions*.
55. A typical example for the justification of a military regime is "Chile: The Reasons of the Junta 1973," 199.
56. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 164; Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," 423; Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics*, 133f; Rouquié, "Demilitarization and the Institutionalization," 111. For examples of actual promises by military juntas see Case, "Democracy's Quality and Breakdown: New Lessons from Thailand"; Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships*, 173; Wiking, *Military Coups*.
57. Lust-Okar and Jamal, "Rulers and Rules," 353; Richards and Waterbury, *Middle East*.

58. King James, cited by Fortier and Fischlin, *James I*. There is a great deal of political writings which argue more or less in the same way, such as the writings of King James. See, for example, Filmer, *Patriarcha*.
59. See, for example, Hourani, *Modern Middle East*, 9.
60. See also, for example, Brooker, "Authoritarian Regimes," 139; Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule*, 8.
61. Geddes, "Democratization"; Hadenius and Teorell, "Pathways."
62. Geddes, "Democratization," 130.
63. Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 86. See also Geddes, "Democratization," 130.
64. Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, 48.
65. See Holbig, "Ideology after the End of the Ideology."
66. Geddes, "Democratization," 129f.
67. Wright and Escribà-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions".
68. Geddes, "Democratization," 129f.
69. Schedler, "Authoritarianism's Last Line".
70. Gandhi and Przeworski, "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion," 14.
71. Mahoney, "Knowledge Accumulation."

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