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1. Introduction

The Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg) dataset classifies political regimes from 1900 to the present based on their patterns of legitimation, examining how political authority is justified and institutionalized. Combined with its systematic coverage of numerous political entities often absent from other datasets, such as ephemeral states (Tibet, Sikkim, Newfoundland), microstates (Monaco, Andorra, Liechtenstein), pre-statehood US territories (Alaska and Hawaii), and non-sovereign territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, French Guiana, Gibraltar), Va-PoReg provides a theoretically grounded framework particularly valuable for understanding autocratic diversity, regime stability, and legitimation crises (for details on the units of analysis, scope and methodological foundation, see Chapter 3).

Historically, many cross-national datasets categorized political regimes along a simple democracy-autocracy dichotomy. In a major advance, the seminal work of Barbara Geddes (1999) introduced systematic distinctions among different types of autocratic regimes based on their institutional configurations, differentiating military, single-party, and personalist rule according to who holds power and through what organizational structures. Building upon this institutional turn, Va-PoReg argues that legitimation provides a more fundamental organizing principle (Kailitz 2009, Kailitz 2013). The justifications regimes offer for their authority shape their institutions, their durability, and their vulnerability to crisis. This legitimation-based approach aims to provide a deeper explanatory framework: legitimation patterns explain why military regimes rely on command hierarchies, ideocracies on ideological orthodoxy and party discipline, and monarchies on dynastic networks, and why they consequently face distinct crisis trajectories. Understanding how regimes claim legitimacy reveals why certain institutional arrangements emerge and how they function in practice.

Va-PoReg classifies regimes by their legitimation patterns, which are the claims through which political authority is justified and the institutions through which these claims are organized. Different regime types construct fundamentally different legitimation logics. Electoral regimes justify authority through claims to popular mandate, building institutions around parliaments, parties, and elections. Monarchies ground legitimacy in dynastic succession and hereditary right. Ideocracies derive authority from utopian ideological visions, whether communist, fascist or Islamist. Military regimes construct legitimacy through narratives of national salvation and order, while personalist autocracies center authority on individual charisma and personal rule. Colonial regimes, which dominated much of the world until the mid-twentieth century and

persist in a few cases today, justify domination through claims of civilizational superiority and developmental tutelage, organizing rule through metropolitan control over dependent territories.

All regimes make legitimation claims, but these claims vary dramatically in their credibility and institutional manifestation. Electoral regimes span the spectrum from liberal democracies, where competitive elections genuinely confer popular mandate, to electoral autocracies, where manipulated contests generate only a façade of consent. The presence of an elected parliament distinguishes constitutional from autocratic monarchy. The degree of indigenous participation in governance differentiates direct colonial rule, where metropolitan officials monopolize administrative positions, from indirect rule, where local elites retain substantial authority under colonial oversight. These features, along with official rhetoric and constitutional provisions, are the observable indicators used to classify regimes.

Va-PoReg complements the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project through a fundamentally different analytical lens. V-Dem measures regimes along a continuum of democratic quality, treating regime differences as matters of degree. Va-PoReg classifies regimes by their forms of legitimation and institutional structure, treating them as qualitatively distinct types. Saudi Arabia, for example, scores as a closed autocracy in V-Dem's framework (low on democratic attributes), but is classified as an autocratic monarchy in Va-PoReg's typology. This designation emphasizes its dynastic-hereditary legitimation and fundamentally distinguishes it from military or party-based rule.

Researchers should select the framework that best fits their analytical objectives. Studies of democratic backsliding benefit from V-Dem's continuous measurement of democratic quality. Research on regime stability, elite dynamics, or colonial legacies draws on Va-PoReg's legitimation-based classifications and systematic coding of both colonizer and colony regimes.

Chapter 5 (Regime Categories: Conceptualization and Operationalization) presents the detailed definitions and coding rules that operationalize this conceptual framework.

2. The Concept of Political Regime

Before specifying which political entities are covered and how they are coded, it is necessary to clarify what a political regime is. The concept of political regime is the conceptual foundation of Va-PoReg: the unit boundaries defined in Chapter 3, the variable architecture of Chapter 4, and the regime typology of Chapter 6 all derive from it. As Sartori (1970: 1033) observed, the most persistent errors in comparative politics originate in concept misformation at the foundational level, not in measurement or method.

2.1 Defining Political Regime: Core Elements and Conceptual Boundaries

The concept of political regime is one of the most consistently underspecified concepts in comparative politics. Gerardo Munck noted nearly three decades ago that “very rarely do regime analysts stop to define what they mean by political regime” (1996: 6). A recent systematic review of 196 articles published in five leading political science journals between 1996 and 2023 found the situation largely unchanged: only 18 provided an explicit definition (Cianetti/Del Panta/Owen 2025: 1975). This is not merely an academic shortcoming. Implicit definitional choices shape entire research agendas, opening certain lines of inquiry while foreclosing others. Sartori diagnosed the underlying risk as conceptual stretching: when core concepts are left underspecified, they are gradually applied to cases and contexts that distort their meaning and weaken the comparative inferences drawn from them (Sartori 1970: 1033).

A political regime is a set of rules that identifies who has access to power, who is authorized to select the government, and under what conditions and limitations authority is exercised (Kailitz 2013: 39, Munck 1996: 7-9, Schmitter/Karl 1991: 76). Two questions are of fundamental importance for any classification of political regimes: who rules, and how is rule exercised? A third is equally significant: why do rulers rule, on what basis do they claim the right to govern (Kailitz 2024: 12)? Va-PoReg argues that the answer to this third question, the pattern of legitimation, provides the most productive basis for regime classification. The argument for this claim is developed in Sections 2.2 and 2.3; it is not a premise but a conclusion.

Three conceptual boundaries define what a political regime is and what it is not: A political regime is not the same as the state. The state is the political-territorial unit within which a regime operates, the institutional container constituted by territory, population, and formal sovereignty. The regime is the organizational logic of authority within that container. The same state can

pass through multiple regime types without ceasing to exist: Germany moved from imperial monarchy through the Weimar Republic, National Socialist ideocracy, and postwar liberal democracy while remaining recognizably a German state. Regime and state are therefore analytically independent, even when empirically intertwined.

A political regime is not the same as the **government**. Governments are the specific actors who hold executive office at a given time; they come and go within a regime's institutional framework. The regime defines the rules by which governments acquire and exercise power. A change of government, however dramatic, does not constitute a regime change unless the structural rules governing access to and exercise of authority are themselves transformed. Conflating regime and government produces systematic coding errors, particularly in personalist contexts where leader turnover may or may not signal structural transformation (Cianetti/Del Pantà/Owen 2025: 1980f, Kailitz 2013: 39).

A political regime is not the same as the **system of government** in the constitutional sense. Parliamentary, semi-presidential, and presidential arrangements specify the institutional form through which authority operates in electoral regimes, that is, how the relationship between executive and legislature is organized. They do not specify the principle by which authority is justified and reproduced, which is what regime type captures. A parliamentary liberal democracy and a parliamentary electoral autocracy share the same constitutional architecture of executive-legislative relations while resting on fundamentally different principles of authorization: popular mandate in the first case, hereditary succession in the second. Constitutional form and regime type are empirically correlated in some contexts but conceptually distinct and require separate measurement.

2.2 Three Approaches to Political Regime and the Case for Legitimation

The comparative politics literature has converged on three recurrent approaches to regime, each capturing a genuinely important dimension of political authority while remaining incomplete when used in isolation. Cianetti, Del Pantà, and Owen (2025: 1976-1984) identify these as the procedural, the actor-centred, and the sociological approach. The following assessment of their contributions and limitations is the basis on which Va-PoReg's legitimation-centred synthesis is argued, not assumed.

The **procedural approach** defines a regime as the set of formal and informal rules governing access to and exercise of political power. Schmitter and Karl's (1993: 76) formulation is the most influential: a regime is “an ensemble of patterns that determines the methods of access to

the principal public offices; the characteristics of the actors admitted to or excluded from such access; the strategies that actors may use to gain access; and the rules that are followed in the making of publicly binding decisions.” This approach is parsimonious and operationalizable at scale, which explains its dominance in large-N comparative studies and the major datasets built upon it, Polity, Freedom House, V-Dem. Two structural limitations are analytically consequential. First, it tends to measure all regimes against the benchmark of ideal-typical democracy, treating regime differences as matters of degree rather than of qualitative type, producing what authoritarianism scholars have criticized as a “democracy-centric” residual definition in which autocracies are identified by what they lack rather than by what they are (Gerschewski 2023: 29, Glasius 2018, Kailitz 2024: 13). Second, the third element of Schmitter and Karl's definition, the exercise of power in making publicly binding decisions, tends to disappear in operationalization. Regime classification comes to rest almost entirely on electoral competition rules, while the actual exercise of authority between elections is treated as a downstream consequence rather than a constitutive dimension.

The **actor-centred approach** defines a regime in terms of the ruling coalition, the constellation of actors who hold power formally or informally over how the polity is governed and its resources distributed (Mann 1993: 18-19, Svulik 2012). This approach opens the “black box” of how authority is actually exercised and draws attention to horizontal power-sharing arrangements that may be informal, negotiated, and invisible to constitutional analysis (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014). Its limitations are two. When applied in its thinnest form, it risks collapsing regime into individual autocrat, losing the structural dimensions that enable cross-national comparison. More fundamentally, it provides no principled answer to why particular actors constitute a ruling coalition and why that coalition holds: the actor constellation is described, but the logic that organizes and reproduces it is left unexplained.

The **sociological approach** defines a regime as the type and character of the relationship between rulers and ruled, the vertical linkages that bind political arrangements together and determine their durability or fragility (Tilly 2007: 88). This includes dimensions of legitimacy, social contract, co-optation, repression, and popular compliance often invisible to procedural or elite-level analysis. Two limitations are analytically significant. First, the operationalization of “the people” and their relationship to rulers tends to differ depending on regime type, introducing normative asymmetries that foreclose rather than enable meaningful comparison (Cianetti/Del Panta/Owen 2025: 1983f). Second, and more fundamentally, the approach describes the character of the ruler-ruled relationship without specifying what structurally

produces and sustains it: why some rulers can claim a social contract while others cannot, and why particular forms of coercion and co-optation are available to some regimes and not others. The case for legitimation as an integrating principle follows from these specific deficits. Each approach identifies a genuinely indispensable dimension: procedures structuring access to power, actors who hold power and how they coordinate, the terms of the relationship between rulers and governed. What each approach lacks is a common referent that specifies why particular procedures are institutionalized, why particular actors constitute the ruling coalition, and why particular ruler-ruled relations obtain and prove stable or fragile. Legitimation, understood as the institutionalized principle through which a regime claims authority and organizes its reproduction, is that common referent. It structures which procedures are organizationally central because they are the mechanism through which authority is claimed; who constitutes the ruling group because they are the bearers and guardians of the legitimating principle; and what the terms of the ruler-ruled relationship are because different legitimation logics generate structurally different social bases, co-optation strategies, and vulnerability patterns. Legitimation is not a “fourth approach” added to the other three. It is the integrating principle that makes the distinctions among regime types analytically tractable: it specifies which procedures, actors, and ruler-ruled relations are structurally central to each regime type, and it defines the limits within which institutional arrangements can vary without constituting a different type. An absolute monarchy cannot introduce competitive popular elections for the head of government without a break in its legitimation logic; an electoral regime cannot indefinitely suspend elections without the same. Legitimation thus constrains the space of possible institutional variation within each type. This is not a claim that legitimation causally produces all relevant regime variables, but that it provides the ordering criterion by which regime types are distinguished and their institutional variation bounded.

A critical reader might object that institutional power distribution or coercive capacity could serve equally as an integrating principle, and that in many empirical sequences, especially military coups, civil wars, or occupations, coercion is prior to any legitimation claim. This objection identifies a real empirical pattern but does not undermine the argument. Va-PoReg's claim is not that legitimation is chronologically prior to coercion in every case, but that it is analytically prior for classification: a regime cannot be typed by its coercive capacity alone, since coercion is present in all regimes to varying degrees and does not distinguish between them. Legitimation patterns, by contrast, generate different institutional structures, different elite recruitment logics, and different crisis trajectories that coercive capacity alone cannot explain. Where a stabilized legitimation pattern is absent, Va-PoReg codes accordingly, as in No Central

Authority or Non-Electoral Transitional Regime. No case is forced into a legitimation type it does not exhibit.

2.3 Legitimation as the Theoretical Foundation

The concept of legitimation in Va-PoReg derives from Max Weber's sociology of domination (Weber 1978). Weber identified three ideal-typical forms of legitimate authority: traditional authority grounded in inherited custom and hereditary status; charismatic authority grounded in the extraordinary personal qualities of the ruler; and legal-rational authority grounded in impersonal rules and procedural regularity. Weber's central insight, that the type of legitimation shapes the kind of administrative apparatus required to sustain it and the mode of obedience it generates, is the theoretical anchor of Va-PoReg. "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'" (Weber 1978: 213).

Va-PoReg's typology departs from the Weberian scheme in two important respects. First, Weber's charismatic type is not maintained as a distinct regime category. Charisma may play a decisive role in the founding of regimes, but Weber himself described routinization as the dominant trajectory: charismatic authority is structurally unstable and transforms over time into either traditional or legal-rational patterns. As an ongoing organizational logic capable of anchoring a comparative typology, it does not meet the stability threshold required. This does not, however, make personalist rule theoretically invisible. Personalist autocracies in Va-PoReg are regimes in which the ruler's personal discretion controls access to power, office, and resources without the mediating constraints of party organization, military command hierarchy, or established dynastic lineage. The defining feature is not merely the absence of institutional constraints but the positive substitution of personal discretion for impersonal authority: where access to political office depends on the ruler's individual will rather than on any rule-governed selection procedure, the regime is personalist. Charisma may be the founding moment; institutionalized personal discretion is the regime type (Kailitz 2013: 51-52). Second, the twentieth century generated regime types that do not map cleanly onto Weber's three ideal types: ideocratic regimes organized around totalitarian ideology; electoral regimes spanning the full spectrum from liberal democracy to heavily managed autocracy; colonial regimes organized around external sovereignty. Va-PoReg's legitimation-based classification is therefore a theoretically grounded extension of the Weberian framework, not a direct application of it.

Legitimation in Va-PoReg is defined structurally and institutionally. It refers to the principle through which a regime claims authority and organizes its reproduction, reconstructed heuristically from a convergent set of observable indicators: the regime's constitutional self-presentation, the institutional structure through which power is acquired and exercised, the criteria by which ruling elites are recruited, and the characteristic forms through which coercion and co-optation are deployed. No single indicator is sufficient; legitimation type is inferred from their systematic configuration. This heuristic character must be acknowledged directly. Legitimation is not a directly observable datum embedded in institutions and waiting to be read off. It is an analytical construct, applied to observable evidence in the same way that any ideal-typical concept is applied: by asking which type best fits the observable configuration, and by documenting the reasoning and degree of fit in country reports. The tautology objection, that legitimation explains institutions and is identified through them, is real but containable: it is contained by the requirement that legitimation type be independently inferrable from multiple indicators, and by the falsifiability condition that variation within legitimation types (presidential versus parliamentary democracies, for example) should not require legitimation type to vary. Where the same legitimation logic, popular authorization through competitive elections, sustains both institutional forms, the typing is stable. Where no stable configuration is present, the case is documented as contested rather than forced into a type.

Three distinctions keep this definition analytically sharp.

Structural legitimation is distinct from empirical legitimacy. Empirical legitimacy, the actual acceptance of a regime's authority claims by significant portions of the governed population, is neither necessary nor sufficient for the structural legitimation pattern to operate and be coded. Regimes maintain their organizational logic through coercion, co-optation, and bureaucratic inertia long after popular belief in their claims has eroded. The question Va-PoReg asks is not “do people believe in this regime?” but “through what institutionalized principle is authority claimed and reproduced?”

Structural legitimation is distinct from formal legality. Authoritarian regimes routinely maintain constitutional provisions, electoral processes, and rule-of-law rhetoric that bear no relationship to actual governance practice. Va-PoReg follows a *de facto* coding principle throughout: regimes are classified by their observable institutional practices and actual patterns of authority organization, not by their constitutional self-descriptions (see Section 4.6).

Structural legitimation is distinct from legitimation strategy. The specific ideological discourse, performance claims, or symbolic repertoire through which a given regime attempts to persuade its population in a particular period are legitimation strategies. Va-PoReg codes the

structural principle, not the rhetorical content, which varies too widely across cases and over time to anchor a consistent comparative typology.

The claim that legitimation patterns generate characteristic institutional arrangements must be understood as ideal-typical, not deterministic. Historical contingency, path dependence, and external imposition, especially pronounced in colonial and occupation contexts, frequently produce institutional configurations that deviate from what the pure legitimation logic would generate. Va-PoReg's typology classifies the dominant pattern, not a pure type without remainder. Deviations, composite cases, and contested codings are documented in country reports precisely because the ideal-typical framework is a tool for analysis, not a description of empirical reality.

2.4 Regime Classification versus Measurement of Democratic Quality

A persistent source of analytical confusion is the conflation of regime classification with the measurement of democratic quality. Continuous measures of democratic quality, from the Polity index through Freedom House ratings to V-Dem's electoral and liberal democracy indices, assign scores capturing how democratic a given political arrangement is. These measures have underpinned major research programs on democratization, backsliding, and regime performance, and they are suited to the questions they were designed to answer. They are not, however, regime classifications in the sense used here, and the two instruments serve different analytical purposes (Kailitz 2024: 11f, Sartori 1987: 184, 248).

The difference is not that one approach is right and the other wrong. V-Dem in particular is explicitly a multidimensional measurement instrument, not a typology, and it provides disaggregated indicators that can be productively combined with typological classification, for example, to examine variation in the quality of electoral competition within the category of electoral autocracy, or to track gradual erosion of liberal guarantees within formally democratic settings. Va-PoReg and V-Dem address different research questions: V-Dem asks how democratic an arrangement is; Va-PoReg asks what kind of arrangement it is. These are complementary, not competing, questions. Researchers should select the instrument that matches their analytical objective.

The analytical stakes of the distinction are nonetheless real. Sartori (Sartori 1987: 184) argued that political regimes are “bounded wholes”: the analytically important question is often not how democratic a regime is but what kind of regime it is. Saudi Arabia scores as a closed autocracy in V-Dem's framework. In Va-PoReg it is classified as an autocratic monarchy, a designation that foregrounds its dynastic-hereditary legitimation and distinguishes it from military

or party-based autocracies that may score identically on procedural-democratic measures but face entirely different crisis trajectories, generate entirely different elite coordination problems, and call for entirely different explanatory accounts. Where the research question is sensitive to regime type rather than democratic degree, questions about succession crises, elite defection, legitimation breakdown, or colonial legacy, the type distinction carries explanatory weight that a democratic quality score cannot provide on its own.

A typology that sorts regimes solely by their position on a democracy-autocracy continuum risks grouping together regimes that differ fundamentally in organizational logic. This is the problem Geddes (1999) identified: military, single-party, and personalist autocracies, lumped together as “non-democracies”, exhibited systematically different survival rates that only became visible once qualitative type distinctions were introduced.

2.5 Political Regime and Regime Change

The definition of political regime directly determines what counts as a regime change, a question that, as Hanson (2017) observes, lacks accepted criteria in comparative politics. Each of the three approaches identified in Section 2.2 answers the question differently. For the procedural approach, regime change occurs when the rules of electoral competition change significantly. For the actor-centred approach, it occurs when the ruling coalition is replaced. For the sociological approach, it requires a change in the character of the ruler-ruled relationship. These different criteria produce different codings in empirically contested cases, the Color Revolutions and gradual autocratization processes being recurring examples.

For Va-PoReg, a regime change occurs when the structural pattern of legitimation governing political authority shifts from one type to another, when the institutional logic through which authority is constituted, claimed, and organized is reconstituted on a qualitatively different basis. This criterion integrates the procedural, actor, and sociological dimensions by asking which of them has been structurally reconstituted at the level of the legitimation principle.

The introduction of genuinely competitive multiparty elections marks a transition from electoral autocracy to democracy because the procedural legitimation defining democratic authority becomes institutionally operative. A military coup replacing a civilian electoral autocracy marks a regime change because the legitimation logic shifts from electoral to military-institutional. A constitutional monarchy transforming into an electoral democracy marks a regime change because hereditary-dynastic authorization is replaced by popular authorization. In each case the

criterion is structural: does the new arrangement instantiate a qualitatively different legitimation pattern, or does it represent a change of personnel within a continuing institutional logic?

One source of apparent tension must be addressed directly. The de facto coding principle and the use of formal institutional events as coding anchors, the adoption of a new constitution, the first implementation of new rules, can seem contradictory: if formal acts are potentially misleading, why anchor event-based coding in them? The resolution is that formal acts serve as anchors only when they mark or enable a de facto structural shift in the legitimation logic. A constitutional change that formalizes an already-completed transfer of power, or that provides the legal infrastructure for new authority structures already operative, qualifies. A constitutional change that alters formal provisions while leaving actual governance structures intact does not. The formal act is evidence of structural change, not its definition (see Section 4.3 and country-level coding notes).

The identification of regime change in cases of gradual transformation, creeping autocratization, incremental democratic erosion, is the operationally most demanding application of this definition. Va-PoReg identifies structural irreversibility through three jointly assessed indicators: first, the targeted elimination or formal subordination of an institution that was constitutive of the prior legitimation pattern, for example the emasculation of a legislature that constrained the executive in a democracy, or the disbanding of a military council that selected the ruler in a military regime; second, the operational implementation of a replacement institutional structure organized around a different legitimation logic, for example a newly established party apparatus controlling access to office, or a newly constituted electoral management body that systematically manipulates outcomes; and third, observable behavioral adaptation by relevant elites to the new authority structure, evidenced by the reorientation of organizational loyalties, the disbanding of networks tied to the prior framework, the non-contestation of new selection procedures by actors with the capacity to resist, or the absorption of former opposition actors into the new framework on its terms. No single indicator is sufficient; convergence of all three establishes the tipping point with sufficient intersubjective reliability to anchor consistent coding. Cases where these indicators point in different directions are flagged as contested and documented with full sourcing in country reports.

3. Units of Analysis, Scope, and Methodological Foundations

Va-PoReg employs a systematic geographic-historical approach to regime classification. Rather than limiting coverage to contemporary lists of independent states, the dataset identifies all political entities that appeared on the world map from 1900 to the present, tracking their complete trajectories through periods of sovereignty, semi-sovereignty, colonization, occupation, or incorporation into other states. It includes states that experienced episodes of colonization, occupation, or incorporation into other sovereign states, such as Lithuania and Ukraine during their annexation by the Soviet Union. This approach provides a more comprehensive perspective on the political development of nations and populations rather than restricting coverage to continuously independent states. The dataset includes approximately 90 political entities absent from other regime datasets, including ephemeral states (Sikkim, Tibet, Newfoundland, Tanganyika, Zanzibar), microstates (Monaco, Andorra, San Marino, Liechtenstein, Nauru), and non-sovereign territories such as Puerto Rico, Guam, French Guiana, and Gibraltar. However, including non-sovereign territories introduces complexity that may obscure comparative analyses of political regimes. To address this, Va-PoReg is provided in different variants for distinct purposes. Researchers should select the classification variant that best fits their analytical objectives.

3.1 The Colonial Gap in Comparative Politics Research

The dominant datasets in comparative politics share a common and largely unexamined limitation: they restrict their coverage to sovereign states as defined by the Gleditsch and Ward state list or the Correlates of War project's list of state system members. This restriction is not a neutral methodological choice. It is a substantive decision that systematically excludes colonial regimes and non-sovereign territories from comparative analysis, and it has shaped an entire generation of empirical research on democratization, authoritarianism, and regime change in ways that are rarely acknowledged.

The Gleditsch-Ward list, first published in 1999 (Gleditsch/Ward 1999, Gleditsch/Ward 2013) and subsequently adopted as the sampling frame for COW, Polity, V-Dem, LIED, and the vast majority of large-N datasets in political science, operationalizes statehood through a sovereignty threshold that colonial territories by definition cannot meet. A territory governed as a

colony of Britain, France, Belgium, or Portugal is not a member of the international state system and therefore does not appear in any dataset built on this foundation. The practical consequence is dramatic. For the first half of the twentieth century, when colonial empires covered roughly a third of the world's land surface and governed populations that in some regions constituted the majority of human beings alive at the time, the dominant datasets in comparative politics contain no observations whatsoever. The political regimes under which hundreds of millions of people lived, worked, and died are simply absent from the empirical record as constituted by these datasets.

This exclusion is not merely a coverage gap. It produces systematic bias in substantive research findings. Studies of the relationship between development and democracy, of the conditions under which authoritarianism consolidates or collapses, of the long-run effects of colonial rule on subsequent regime trajectories: all operate on samples that exclude the colonial period by construction. When a dataset begins its observation of India in 1947 and of Nigeria in 1960, it treats independence as a starting point rather than as a transition from one regime type to another. The colonial regime that preceded independence is not a baseline; it is simply invisible. Research that treats post-colonial democratization as a process beginning from sovereignty thus misspecifies the historical trajectory from the outset.

Va-PoReg departs from this convention explicitly and on principled grounds. The dataset codes colonial regimes as distinct political entities with their own regime classifications, start dates, and institutional characteristics, for the entire period during which they constitute coherent, administratively distinct units. This means that the British Raj in India, French Algeria, Belgian Congo, Portuguese Angola, and the approximately ninety colonial and semi-colonial entities included in Va-PoReg appear in the dataset not as absences but as observations, classified according to the same structural principles that govern the classification of sovereign states. A researcher using Va-PoReg to study the determinants of authoritarian durability or the preconditions for democratic transition has access to the full historical record, including the colonial period, rather than a truncated sample beginning at independence.

The implications extend beyond historical completeness. Including colonial regimes changes what can be measured, what comparisons can be drawn, and what theoretical claims can be tested. The relationship between external legitimation and regime stability, the conditions under which indirect rule produces different political trajectories than direct rule, the long-run effects of specific colonial administrative forms on post-colonial institutional development: none of these questions can be rigorously examined with datasets that exclude the colonial period by design. Va-PoReg does not treat these as peripheral questions. They are among the most

important questions in the comparative study of political development, and the dataset is constructed to make them answerable.

The decision to include colonial regimes also forces theoretical precision that sovereign-state-only datasets can avoid. Once a colonial territory is treated as a codeable political entity rather than a pre-political blank space, it becomes necessary to specify what kind of political regime it is, how it differs from other regime types, and how transitions into and out of colonial status should be conceptualized. Va-PoReg addresses these questions through the Colonial Regime and Occupation Regime categories, the distinction between direct and indirect rule, and the inclusion and continuity criteria set out in the following sections. The theoretical work required to code colonial regimes rigorously is not a cost of broader coverage; it is an intellectual gain that forces the dataset to be more precise about what political regimes fundamentally are than datasets that can ignore the question by restricting their scope to sovereign states.

3.2 Epistemological Foundation

Va-PoReg is not only a dataset but a theory-informed framework for the comparative analysis of political regimes. Its organizing concept, the pattern of legitimation through which political authority is structured and justified, serves as the analytical anchor for unit definition, continuity rules, and regime classification. Legitimation in this framework is defined structurally and institutionally, not normatively or psychologically: it refers to the organizational logic through which a regime constitutes, recruits, and reproduces political authority. A regime structured around electoral procedures exhibits an electoral legitimation pattern whether its elections are free or manipulated. A colonial regime organized around the authority of an external sovereign exhibits an external legitimation pattern whether that authority is experienced as benevolent or oppressive. Legitimation patterns describe how regimes structure authority institutionally, not whether their claims are convincing or accepted by the governed. This structural definition is applied consistently across all regime categories, including the distinction between Colonial Regime and Part of Other Country, which rests on the organizational source of authority, internal or external, rather than on normative assessments of consent or justice.

Rather than treating regime types as purely descriptive categories, Va-PoReg conceptualizes them as distinct configurations of authority, elite coordination, and institutional reproduction that generate systematically different conditions for regime stability, change, and interaction. Empirical coding decisions are therefore not atheoretical: they are embedded within an explicit perspective on political order that can be evaluated, contested, and refined. The dataset

operationalizes this perspective across all political entities from 1900 to the present to the extent that unit boundaries, continuity rules, and regime categories are derived from it. Users working with Va-PoReg are working with a theory-informed measurement instrument rather than a purely neutral coding device. The theoretical commitments underlying each coding decision are documented here precisely so that researchers who do not share them can nonetheless use the dataset productively, by understanding where its classifications follow from its premises, and where alternative premises would produce different results.

Va-PoReg operates on three explicit design principles that must be understood before applying the inclusion criteria below.

First, Va-PoReg prioritizes replicability over ontological elegance. The criteria governing unit inclusion and continuity decisions are designed to minimize coder discretion and maximize intersubjective reproducibility, using formal textual or institutional markers as verifiable anchors. For regime classification, Va-PoReg follows a *de facto* principle, coding regimes according to their observable institutional practices and actual patterns of authority organization rather than their constitutional self-description. These two principles operate at distinct levels of the dataset architecture and serve distinct functions: inclusion and continuity criteria require external, documentable anchors to achieve replicability across coders and time periods, while regime classification requires sensitivity to actual governance structures, since formal provisions and political reality systematically diverge in authoritarian and colonial contexts. Both levels are grounded in the same underlying theory of political authority: the formal criteria used for inclusion are not arbitrary administrative conventions but operationalizable proxy markers for institutionally constituted political arenas, selected because they are textually verifiable while tracking the same underlying structural reality that the legitimation concept identifies. The constitutional secession right, for instance, is not included because it is politically real in any given case, but because its presence establishes a territory as a formally distinct sub-unit within a federal constitutional order, which is a documentable structural feature of how authority is organizationally partitioned. Users should nonetheless note that inclusion in the dataset does not imply autonomy or self-governance: an entity may be included because a parent state's constitution formally guarantees it a right of secession while simultaneously being classified as a Colonial Regime because the actual organization of authority in that entity derives entirely from external imposition. The Estonian SSR is the paradigmatic instance: included as a dataset unit on the basis of the USSR's constitutional secession clause, classified as Colonial Regime on the basis of the actual organization of political authority. A critic may ask why a constitutional provision sufficiently fictitious to be irrelevant for regime classification is nonetheless used to

anchor inclusion. The answer is that the two criteria serve different analytical functions and the same structural theory at different levels of abstraction. The constitutional provision documents a formal organizational partition of authority within the federal structure, which is what inclusion tracks. It does not describe how authority actually operates within that partition, which is what regime classification tracks. The same provision that establishes the Estonian SSR as a formally distinct arena within Soviet constitutional architecture simultaneously fails to describe how authority in that arena is actually constituted, and that failure is precisely what Colonial Regime classification captures. The two-level architecture does not assume that formal criteria are politically real; it uses formal criteria for the purpose they can reliably serve, and *de facto* criteria for the purpose they must serve. Users conducting quantitative analyses should treat inclusion status and regime classification as analytically distinct variables governed by different logics.

Second, Va-PoReg pursues hierarchically structured typological pluralism rather than ontological monism. Federal transformations are assessed according to institutional continuity logic; post-colonial and post-mandate foundations are assessed according to sociological discontinuity logic. This duality is not an inconsistency but a principled recognition that structurally different types of political transformation require structurally different coding rules.

Third, Va-PoReg makes its methodological choices explicit where comparable datasets leave them implicit. COW, Polity, V-Dem, and LIED all combine multiple coding logics without fully documenting the resulting tensions. Va-PoReg acknowledges these tensions and resolves them through explicit priority rules. This transparency is the primary epistemological advantage of the dataset relative to its competitors, not theoretical elegance.

3.3 Inclusion Criteria for Territorial Units

The inclusion of a territorial unit as a distinct dataset entry is governed by three criteria, at least one of which must be satisfied. These criteria apply uniformly across all world regions and historical periods covered by the dataset. Where criteria conflict in a given case, the conflict resolution rule specified in Section 2.5 applies.

Criterion A: Prior or Subsequent Statehood. A territorial unit is included if it previously existed as an independent or semi-independent state before incorporation into a larger political entity, or if it subsequently achieves internationally recognized statehood or *de facto* independent governance. A political entity qualifies as a state under this criterion if it simultaneously satisfies all three of the following conditions: it exercises effective control over a defined territory; it

possesses a functioning executive organ acting in the name of the entity rather than as a direct administrative extension of an external power; and it is recognized as a distinct political entity by at least two sovereign states that have no mutual recognition interest in inflating each other's status, or by one major intergovernmental organization, as evidenced by diplomatic correspondence, formal recognition documents, or inclusion in official cartographic or administrative records of a major power or, where such records are unavailable or systematically biased due to colonial non-recognition, in equivalent documentation drawn from established historical reference works, peer-reviewed scholarly cartographic compilations, or widely used and institutionally maintained reference sources that provide verifiable documentary evidence contemporary to the entity's existence. Such reference sources serve as access points to documented evidence rather than as normative authorities in their own right: the decisive criterion is whether the source provides intersubjectively verifiable evidence that an independent researcher can consult and assess. The two-state threshold requires triangulation: mutual recognition between two entities with a shared interest in reciprocal legitimation does not satisfy the criterion unless at least one recognizing state has no direct stake in the recognized entity's status. The evidential standard for the third condition is applied symmetrically across world regions: the absence of documentation in European or North American archives does not constitute evidence of non-existence where equivalent regional documentation exists. All three conditions are necessary; none is sufficient alone. Short-lived and satellite states qualify under this criterion provided all three conditions are met.

Criterion B: Semi-Sovereignty. A territorial unit is included if it possesses a degree of institutional autonomy that places it categorically above mere internal administrative subdivision. Semi-sovereignty is operationalized as the simultaneous presence of at least two of the following four features: a distinct legislative body with genuine competences, a separate executive apparatus, recognized standing in international or intergovernmental forums, and a distinct legal or constitutional status not shared by other subdivisions of the parent entity. The fourth feature requires that the status in question be unique to the territorial unit rather than a general feature of the parent state's devolution architecture. Devolved administrations operating within a general devolution framework do not satisfy this feature, as their status is shared by other subdivisions of the same parent entity. Scotland within the United Kingdom does not meet this threshold: its legislative competences and executive apparatus are structurally comparable to those of Wales and Northern Ireland, and its constitutional status is part of a general pattern of asymmetric devolution that applies across multiple sub-units rather than constituting a singular institutional arena. Catalonia within Spain similarly does not qualify, as its autonomous status is

shared by other *comunidades autonomas*. The exclusion of these entities reflects not a judgment about their political significance but the consistent application of the uniqueness requirement.

Criterion C: Colonial or Non-Self-Governing Status. A territorial unit is included if it is governed as a colonial or non-self-governing territory by an external power and constitutes a coherent, administratively distinct unit clearly separable from the metropolitan territory of the administering power. For the period from 1946 onward, appearance on the UN List of Non-Self-Governing Territories serves as the primary operationalization of this criterion. For the period prior to 1946, the criterion is applied on the basis of the character of colonial administration as documented in historical sources, with reference where applicable to the League of Nations mandate system or comparable international designations. Three conditions must be jointly met. First, the territory is governed by an external power that exercises ultimate political control, whether through direct administration or through indirect rule arrangements. Second, the territory constitutes a coherent, administratively distinct unit clearly separable from the metropolitan territory and from other colonial units governed by the same power, as evidenced by separate governance structures, defined boundaries, and treatment as a distinct unit in administrative records. Third, the territory corresponds sufficiently to a later or prior independent or semi-independent political entity as defined under Criterion A or B, where sufficiently is operationalized as overlap of at least two-thirds of the territory and population with the later or prior entity, or is designated as a non-self-governing territory by a recognized international body.

3.4 Start Date of Coverage

Once a territorial unit qualifies for inclusion, its start date is set at the earliest point at which the relevant criterion is satisfied and the unit constitutes a coherent, identifiable territorial entity whose boundaries correspond sufficiently to the territory of the later or prior state. Periods during which the territory was divided between multiple parent entities without a unified administrative structure do not qualify. Latvia, for example, is excluded prior to 11/18/1918 because its territory was divided between the Governorate of Courland and parts of Livonia without a unified administrative structure corresponding to the later Latvian state.

Under Criterion A with prior statehood, the start date is the date of the unit's first appearance as a recognizable political entity satisfying all three conditions. Under Criterion A with subsequent statehood, the start date is the earliest date at which the territory constitutes a coherent administrative unit corresponding sufficiently to the territory of the later state. Under Criterion B, the start date is the date on which semi-sovereign status was formally established. Under

Criterion C, the start date is the date of colonial acquisition or the start of the dataset's coverage period, whichever is later, provided the territory constituted a coherent administrative unit at that time.

3.5 Coding of Incorporated Periods: Part of Other Country vs. Colonial Regime, and Conflict Resolution

For periods during which a qualifying territorial unit is governed by a parent entity rather than independently, the dataset assigns one of two coding categories depending on the organizational structure of authority. The distinction rests on a single structural question: does the political authority governing this territory derive from and remain organized around an internal institutional source, or does it derive from and remain organized around an external sovereign? This is a question about the institutional architecture of authority, not about normative assessments of consent, justice, or legitimacy in a philosophical sense. It is answered by examining how authority is constituted, recruited, and reproduced in practice, through the same *de facto* principle that governs all regime classification in Va-PoReg.

Part of Other Country is assigned when the territory is fully integrated into another sovereign state's political and administrative system and governed through that state's own institutional structures. In this configuration, the organizational source of authority is internal to the state system governing the territory: officials derive their positions through the parent state's own recruitment and accountability mechanisms, legal frameworks are those of the parent state applied uniformly, and the territory's political order is an extension of rather than subordinate to the parent state's regime. This category also applies to constituent republics of formally federal states whose constitutions explicitly guarantee a right of secession to member units, on the grounds that such a constitutional provision is a textually verifiable, binary criterion that establishes the territory as a formally distinct sub-unit within a shared political order. The dataset applies this criterion to the union republics of the USSR, the constituent republics of Yugoslavia, and the Czech and Slovak constituent republics of Czechoslovakia from 01/01/1969 onward.

Colonial Regime is assigned when the organizational structure of authority is externally constituted: the governing apparatus derives its authority from and remains accountable to an external sovereign rather than to any internal institutional source within the governed territory. This is a structural description of how authority is organized, not a normative judgment about the quality of governance. The external organization of authority is identified through three independently

sufficient structural indicators. First, the governing apparatus was installed by an external power and is maintained through that power's institutional mechanisms rather than through any internal political process, and this external constitution of authority is documented by the absence of recognition from at least one permanent member of the UN Security Council together with a pattern of non-recognition among UN member states, with non-recognition functioning here as observable evidence that the external organization of authority lacks institutional grounding in the broader state system. Second, the territory appears on the UN List of Non-Self-Governing Territories or holds equivalent status, which constitutes direct institutional documentation that the governing apparatus is externally constituted. Third, the governing apparatus exercises authority through institutional structures that are organized around the interests and accountability mechanisms of the external sovereign rather than around any internal political process: officials are recruited by, accountable to, and replaceable by the external power rather than by any institution internal to the governed territory. Each indicator identifies the same structural condition, external constitution of the governing apparatus, through different documentary evidence. They are not normative criteria but observable features of how authority is organized.

Normative Conflict Resolution Rule. Where the conditions for Part of Other Country and Colonial Regime are simultaneously present, specifically where a territory is a formally constituted sub-unit of a federal state but where the governing apparatus within that territory was installed by and remains organized around an external sovereign rather than any internal institutional process, Colonial Regime takes precedence. The federal structure describes the administrative form, but the organizational source of authority determines the classification. Where authority is externally constituted despite a formal federal framework, the external legitimation pattern is the operative structural reality.

The Baltic states under Soviet rule are the primary instance of this rule. As formally constituted Soviet republics with a constitutionally guaranteed right of secession, they satisfy the Part of Other Country criterion at the formal level. As territories whose governing apparatus was installed by Soviet force in 1940, organized around Soviet rather than internal institutional accountability mechanisms, and never recognized as legitimately constituted by major international actors throughout the Soviet period, they satisfy the Colonial Regime criterion at the structural level. The conflict resolution rule assigns Colonial Regime.

The asymmetric coding of the Baltic states under Soviet but not Tsarist rule reflects the following structural distinction. The Soviet incorporation of 1940 reversed an established political order with its own internally constituted governing apparatus and replaced it with an externally constituted one, a structural transformation that was documented by international non-

recognition throughout the Soviet period. The Tsarist incorporation of the Baltic provinces predated the existence of any internally constituted governing apparatus in those territories that could be structurally reversed. External constitution of authority attaches not to the character of imperial rule per se, but to the structural reversal of a prior internally constituted governing apparatus under conditions of documented international non-recognition.

3.6 Divergences from COW and Related Datasets in the Coding of State Continuity

Va-PoReg diverges systematically from the Correlates of War dataset and related projects in its treatment of state continuity. COW prioritizes continuity of international legal personality; Va-PoReg prioritizes the organizational structure of political authority. This produces four systematic divergences. Federal transformations are assessed by institutional continuity logic; post-colonial and post-mandate foundations by sociological discontinuity logic.

Sociological discontinuity is operationalized through three jointly considered structural markers: a complete break in constitutional succession, meaning the new entity explicitly constitutes its authority independently of rather than deriving it from the prior order; an explicit founding act through which the new entity establishes distinct symbols, institutional myths, and claims to authority; and a fundamental reconstitution of the state apparatus, executive, military, bureaucratic, such that the new entity builds rather than inherits these structures. The decisive question is whether the new entity organizes political authority on a structurally distinct basis rather than continuing the prior one.

USSR and Russia. Va-PoReg codes the USSR as a distinct political entity from 12/30/1922, when the Treaty on the Creation of the USSR established a formally federal state with four co-equal founding members and a constitutional secession right for all union republics. Russia (RSFSR) is coded as ceasing to exist as an independent entity from this date.

Yugoslavia and Serbia. Va-PoReg codes Yugoslavia as a distinct political entity from 12/01/1918, the date of the formal proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which constituted a new political order through the unification of previously distinct entities under a common governing structure established by the Corfu Declaration and subsequent founding acts. Serbia is coded as ceasing to exist as an independent entity from this date. The 1974 Yugoslav constitution's secession provisions provide the basis for including constituent republics as distinct dataset entries during the federation period; they do not retroactively determine Serbia's end date, which is grounded in the 1918 founding act.

Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. Va-PoReg codes the Turkish Republic as a distinct political entity from 10/29/1923 on the basis of sociological discontinuity. All three structural markers are present: explicit constitutional break with the Ottoman order through abolition of sultanate and caliphate; explicit founding act constituting a new political identity through rejection of Ottoman dynastic symbols and articulation of a Turkish national founding myth; and reconstitution of the state apparatus through abolition of Ottoman executive and religious structures and establishment of new administrative, military, and judicial institutions. The Ottoman Empire is coded as ending with the Armistice of Mudros on 10/30/1918.

Israel and Mandatory Palestine. Va-PoReg codes Israel as a distinct political entity from 05/14/1948 on the basis of sociological discontinuity. The British Mandate constituted a governing apparatus organized around an external sovereign. Israel satisfies all three structural markers: it constituted its authority independently through a Declaration of Independence explicitly rejecting derivation from the Mandate structure; its founding act established a distinct political order with its own institutional claims; and its governing apparatus was constituted independently rather than transferred from Mandate administration. Inheritance of certain administrative practices does not constitute structural continuity of the governing apparatus, for the same reason that post-colonial African states are not treated as continuations of their colonial administrations. Mandatory Palestine and Israel are coded as distinct entries with separate regime trajectories.

3.7 Subnational and Non-Sovereign Entities

Va-PoReg's coding universe is bounded by its foundational structural principle: a territorial unit constitutes a codeable regime when it exhibits a distinct and analytically separable pattern of authority organization, an identifiable institutional structure through which political authority is constituted, recruited, and reproduced on a basis not wholly derivative of the overarching regime governing it. Where no such distinct organizational structure exists, no distinct regime exists to classify.

This principle governs the treatment of subnational structures, including nominally independent entities created within authoritarian systems. The Bantustans established under South African apartheid, including Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei, illustrate the operative distinction. These entities possessed formal institutional apparatus including parliaments, executives, and in four cases internationally recognized declarations of independence. Assessed by administrative form alone, they may appear comparable to entities included in Va-PoReg. The

decisive criterion, however, is not administrative form but the organizational source of authority. The Bantustans' governing apparatus was constituted by and derived its authority entirely from South African apartheid legislation. Their institutional existence was an instrument of the apartheid regime's population policy. No organizationally distinct structure existed that was separable from the apartheid framework: the governing apparatus of these entities was not constituted on an independent basis but was wholly an extension of the overarching external imposition. On these grounds, they do not qualify as distinct codeable regimes under current criteria. This exclusion is not categorical or permanent. Va-PoReg's inclusion criteria are principle-based, not list-based. A territorial unit that can demonstrate a distinct organizational structure of authority, including entities that originated as instruments of an authoritarian system but subsequently developed independent bases of authority constitution, acquired recognition independent of the creating power, or achieved governance structures not derivable from the original imposition, would qualify for inclusion under Criterion A or B. Whether analogous entities in other contexts meet this threshold depends on the application of the same criteria, assessed case by case.

The contrast with the Baltic states under Soviet rule requires explicit statement. The Estonian SSR under Stalin possessed no greater practical autonomy than Transkei under apartheid. The difference is structural, not empirical. The Baltic states entered Soviet incorporation with previously established governing apparatuses organized around internal institutional sources. Their incorporation structurally reversed a prior organizational order rather than constituting a new one from external imposition. The Bantustans had no prior internally constituted governing apparatus to reverse. Their institutional form was created by and for the apartheid state. The operative distinction is between the structural reversal of a prior internally constituted governing apparatus and the creation of an administrative instrument within an existing externally constituted one, not a judgment about relative autonomy or effective independence.

Where subnational structures complicate the classification of the overarching regime, this is documented in coding annotations at the level of the relevant territorial unit.

4. Conceptual and Methodological Foundations

4.1 Variable Development and Conceptual Integrity

The development of each variable in Va-PoReg begins with conceptual precision. Variables are defined on the basis of clearly delimited theoretical constructs drawn from the comparative literature on political regimes, authoritarianism, democratization, and hybrid forms of rule. The organizing concept of the dataset, the pattern of legitimation through which political authority is structured and justified, provides the theoretical foundation from which all variable definitions derive. Each variable either directly captures a specific configuration of legitimation or measures institutional conditions that stabilize, constrain, or transform such configurations over time. Variables do not merely describe observable features of political systems; they operationalize dimensions of authority organization that the legitimation framework identifies as analytically significant.

Va-PoReg distinguishes each concept clearly from adjacent or overlapping constructs. Regime type is strictly separated from government composition, institutional design from regime performance, and electoral form from civil liberties. Definitions are crafted to be globally applicable and reflect cumulative theoretical insights, including both classical regime typologies and recent disaggregated approaches. Where Va-PoReg introduces concepts not present in comparable datasets, particularly for colonial and occupation regimes, variable definitions are derived from the same structural legitimation logic that governs all other regime categories, ensuring conceptual consistency across the full typological range.

4.2 Dimension Independence and Typological Architecture

Each variable captures a distinct, analytically independent dimension of regime structure or transformation. Redundancies and internal overlaps are systematically avoided. The typology is modular: core components such as regime change mechanisms, direction of change, suffrage inclusiveness, and electoral competitiveness are treated as standalone variables. Where aggregate or binary versions are introduced, for example simplified regime classifications or liberal-autocratic dichotomies, they are marked as analytically derived and never treated as conceptually independent. These derivations are fully documented and justified for specific analytical

purposes. The modular architecture allows researchers to combine variables selectively depending on their analytical objectives while maintaining the conceptual integrity of each component.

4.3 Regime Change and Temporal Granularity

The dataset applies a temporally consistent and historically sensitive logic. All Va-PoReg regime variables use July 1st as the annual reference date to determine which regime phase and characteristics are in place for a given year. This includes regime type classifications, democracy/autocracy indicators, monarchy classifications, colonial status, and all regime change and duration measures. For event-based variables such as regime start and end dates (`vaporeg_regstart_*`, `vaporeg_regend_*`), codings are anchored in institutional facts (e.g., adoption of a new constitution, collapse of ruling elites, first implementation of new rules). In cases of gradual transition (e.g., creeping autocratization), coders must identify the tipping point at which change becomes substantively irreversible. This approach balances sensitivity to gradual change with temporal precision and ensures that annual classifications remain comparable across cases while preserving event-level accuracy.

4.4 Why Multiple Classifications? An Epistemic Perspective

The Va-PoReg dataset provides multiple regime classification schemes that operate at different levels of typological aggregation. These levels do not merely reflect data reduction but encode distinct theoretical decisions about which differences in legitimation are treated as constitutive for regime types and which are treated as analytically secondary for specific research questions. Because legitimation is the primary classification principle in Va-PoReg, each aggregation decision is a decision about how much of the legitimation-based variation to retain. Higher aggregation levels are not convenience simplifications but epistemological filters: they systematically remove distinctions between legitimation orders and thereby determine which causal mechanisms remain visible in the data and which do not.

At the most disaggregated level (`vaporeg_regtype_detailed`), the dataset preserves the full range of regime types defined by distinct legitimation orders. At this level, classifications follow the principle that differences in the underlying logic of legitimation constitute different regime types, even if they coexist with similar institutional features. The compact classification reduces this complexity only where regimes share the same fundamental legitimation logic and differ

primarily in institutional form or degree. Liberal and electoral democracy are merged into democracy because both derive legitimation from the same source, popular authorization through elections, and differ in the quality of that authorization rather than in its fundamental logic. Electoral oligarchy and electoral hybrid regime are merged into electoral and liberal hybrid regime; colonial and occupation regimes are each collapsed across modes of rule. Crucially, distinctions across different legitimation families, such as communist ideocracy versus one-party autocracy, or military versus personalist autocracy, are preserved at the compact level because they reflect qualitatively different bases of rule.

Higher levels of aggregation progressively relax this principle. The quadruple typology reduces regime diversity to democracy, hybrid regime, electoral autocracy, and closed autocracy, collapsing all non-electoral autocracies into a single category irrespective of their legitimation logic. When an autocratic monarchy and a military autocracy are subsumed into closed autocracy, this is a decision to treat their differences as analytically irrelevant for the research question at hand. The triple typology further merges electoral and closed autocracies, and binary classifications reduce regimes to democracy versus non-democracy or autocracy versus non-autocracy. At these levels, classification no longer systematically tracks distinctions between legitimation orders but prioritizes broader distinctions such as electoral access or regime openness.

These aggregation choices structure the causal visibility of the data through a sequential logic: aggregation removes distinctions between legitimation orders; removed distinctions render variation unobservable; unobservable variation makes specific causal hypotheses untestable. This is not a theoretical abstraction but a practical consequence with direct implications for inference. A study of whether communist ideocracies exhibit different survival patterns than one-party autocracies requires the detailed or compact level: the quadruple typology collapses both into closed autocracy, rendering the hypothesis invisible to the data. An analysis of direct versus indirect colonial rule requires the detailed level: compact aggregation eliminates the distinction entirely. More broadly, any study that pools structurally incompatible mechanisms, such as the dynastic stability of monarchies and the fragile command coalitions of military regimes, under a single closed autocracy category risks producing estimates that average over fundamentally different causal processes. This is the same problem that Geddes identified when pooling military, single-party, and personalist autocracies as non-democracies: the pooled estimates concealed systematic variation that only became visible once type distinctions were introduced. Aggregation in Va-PoReg creates the same risk when applied to research questions that are sensitive to legitimation-based differences.

Va-PoReg therefore makes the theoretical premises of each aggregation level explicit. The dataset does not prescribe a single correct classification but enables users to align their choice of typology with their theoretical argument and to understand precisely what causal scope conditions they are accepting or foreclosing at each level of aggregation. Multiple classifications serve not as redundant measures but as instruments for maintaining analytical precision while ensuring full transparency about which legitimation-based distinctions are preserved and which are filtered out in empirical analysis.

4.5 Normative Benchmarks and Global Standards

Where variables involve normative judgments, especially those concerning regime quality, democratic standards, or autocratic erosion, assessments are anchored in internationally recognized and theoretically grounded benchmarks. Criteria for electoral competitiveness, civil liberties, and executive constraints align with foundational traditions in democratic theory. Arbitrary, culturally biased, or region-specific standards are explicitly rejected in favor of conceptually robust, globally applicable reference points.

4.6 Transparency, Replicability, and Discretionary Judgments

All variables in Va-PoReg are defined and operationalized to capture the de facto characteristics of political regimes. Coding is based on observable institutional practices and political behavior rather than on formal-legal provisions or constitutional texts. Wherever possible, coders rely on documented empirical evidence, such as actual electoral conduct, the effective role of legislatures, or patterns of executive dominance, to assess regime features. Legal or constitutional frameworks are considered only to the extent that they shape real political outcomes.

To ensure consistency and replicability across time and cases, each variable is accompanied by explicit coding rules, thresholds, and illustrative examples. Where interpretation is required, especially in cases of ambiguity, hybrid configurations, or contested evidence, coders follow standardized decision criteria and are instructed to document their reasoning and the degree of certainty in structured case notes. This procedure ensures intersubjective reliability, transparency, and methodological rigor throughout the dataset.

5. Technical Specifications

The technical specifications of Va-PoReg ensure that the dataset is not only conceptually consistent but also practically usable across major software environments. They cover the rules for naming variables, the file formats in which the dataset is released, and the provision of comprehensive variable lists for each version.

5.1 Variable Name Convention

Variable names follow a strict three-part convention to guarantee consistency across Va-PoReg and compatibility with Stata, R, and Python. All names are written in lowercase snake_case, limited to letters, digits, and underscores, and restricted to a maximum length of 32 characters. Each variable name consists of three components: a dataset prefix, a dimension tag, and an indicator token. The fixed prefix `vaporeg` links every variable to the dataset. The dimension element identifies the conceptual family (for example `duration`, `regtype`, `participation`, `competition`, `constraints`, `liberties`). The indicator element is a concise mnemonic for the specific measure (for example `bindem` for the binary democracy indicator). Following this convention, `vaporeg_duration_bindem` denotes the binary democracy indicator within the duration dimension. The same scheme applies uniformly to all current and future variables. Any legacy names are retained only as aliases and must be mapped to their canonical form in the data dictionary to ensure backward compatibility.

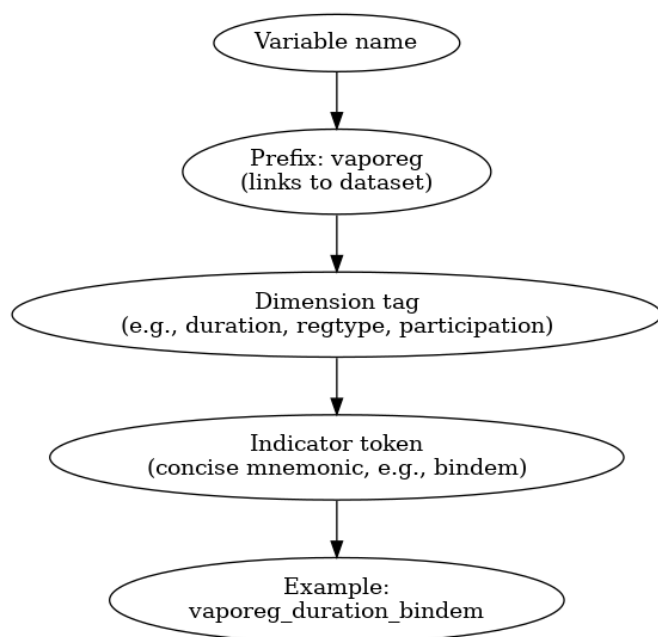


Figure 1: Structure of variable names in Va-PoReg

5.2 File Structure and Format

Va-PoReg is distributed in formats suitable for major statistical software environments, including Stata (.dta), R (.rds), and CSV. Variable names and labels are harmonized across formats. Metadata files (README and codebook) are provided to ensure transparency and facilitate replication. The dataset is structured in a country-year format, with event-based supplements provided in separate files. All files are UTF-8 encoded. Researchers can therefore work with Va-PoReg across different platforms without technical obstacles.

5.3 Variable Lists and Aliases

Each release of Va-PoReg includes a comprehensive variable list, which is provided both in the codebook and as a separate machine-readable file (CSV/Excel). The list documents all active variables, their conceptual dimension, operationalization, coding scheme, and corresponding legacy aliases where applicable. Aliases are retained for reasons of backward compatibility with earlier dataset versions. Users are strongly encouraged to adopt the canonical variable names defined by the naming convention described in Section 5.1. The machine-readable version of the list is automatically generated from the dataset to ensure accuracy and is updated with each

release. This dual system, detailed explanatory documentation in the codebook and a separate technical file for direct data use, guarantees maximum transparency and usability.

6. Regime Categories: Conceptualization and Operationalization

This section presents the Va-PoReg regime typology, organized according to primary modes of legitimation. Legitimation refers to the structural pattern through which regimes organize and justify political authority. The focus lies on the institutional architecture and organizing logic of authority rather than on the empirical credibility or popular acceptance of legitimation claims. A regime structured around electoral procedures exhibits an electoral legitimation pattern whether its elections are genuinely free and fair or systematically manipulated. Similarly, a regime organized around dynastic succession manifests a monarchical legitimation pattern irrespective of whether divine right doctrines retain cultural resonance. A personalist autocracy centered on constructed personality cults operates through a personalist legitimation pattern even when charisma is fabricated rather than genuine. Legitimation patterns thus describe how regimes structure authority institutionally, not whether their claims to legitimacy are convincing or accepted by the governed.

The legitimation pattern fundamentally shapes the composition, cohesion, and network structures of the ruling elite, both within regimes and across regime boundaries. In electoral regimes, elites are recruited through party structures and electoral competition, with cohesion maintained through coalition-building and accountability to electoral constituencies. Networks within these regimes form along partisan, legislative, and constituency lines, while inter-regime networks develop through democratic solidarity mechanisms, electoral observation frameworks, and alliance structures privileging fellow electoral systems. In personalist regimes, elites consist of personal loyalists bound to the ruler through patronage networks, with cohesion dependent on the ruler's capacity to distribute resources and maintain control. Intra-regime networks center on family, clan, and loyalty circles radiating from the ruler, while inter-regime connections often remain limited or operate through personalist-to-personalist arrangements that prioritize regime survival over ideological or institutional affinities. Ideology-centered regimes recruit elites through ideological conformity and party schools, with cohesion enforced through doctrinal discipline. Networks within these regimes are structured through party cells and ideological hierarchies, while inter-regime networks may form international ideological movements (such as the Communist International or transnational Islamist coordination) that transcend state boundaries. Military regimes organize elites along command hierarchies, with cohesion derived from institutional loyalty and officer corps solidarity. Intra-regime networks follow military command structures and professional military ties, while inter-regime networks often manifest

in military-to-military cooperation, defense pacts, or patterns of coup contagion. Monarchical regimes embed elites within dynastic lineages and aristocratic networks, with cohesion structured through kinship and hereditary privilege. Networks form through courtly hierarchies and noble kinship systems internally, while monarchical regimes may coordinate through dynastic marriages, royal summits, or exclusive monarchical forums (such as Gulf Cooperation Council mechanisms). The legitimation pattern thus determines not only how authority is justified but also who exercises power, how elites are recruited, how elite cohesion is maintained, and through what channels regimes form networks both internally and with similar regimes internationally.

The classification encompasses regimes based on electoral legitimation (where authority is organized through electoral procedures), personalist legitimation (where authority is embodied in specific persons or lineages), ideology-centered legitimation (where authority is structured around doctrinal blueprints), institutional legitimation (where authority derives from organizational structures such as military command or single-party systems), external legitimation (where authority is imposed by foreign powers), and special cases where conventional legitimation modes are absent or unclear.

Each regime category is defined conceptually and operationalized through specific, observable criteria. The conceptual definitions articulate the legitimation pattern that structures political authority within each regime type. The operationalization criteria specify the empirical indicators used to classify political entities, including institutional features, electoral characteristics, executive constraints, and civil liberties.

Special attention is given to borderline cases, systematically categorized as just-in and just-out cases. Just-in cases satisfy the minimum criteria for inclusion in a regime category despite significant proximity to a neighboring type; they represent the closest approach to the category boundary from within. Just-out cases display substantial characteristics of a category but fail to satisfy at least one decisive criterion; they represent the closest approach from outside. Classification of borderline cases follows the same operationalized criteria applied to paradigmatic cases, with qualitative assessment guided by the overarching principle of legitimation patterns. The decisive question is always which legitimation pattern structures authority for the effective head of executive, not formal constitutional provisions alone. Borderline cases are documented with detailed justifications in country reports, ensuring traceability and transparency for contested classifications. All coding decisions reflect the regime type in place on July 1st of each year. Transitions occurring after this date are recorded separately through start and end variables

but do not affect the coding for the calendar year. This temporal anchor ensures consistency across cases while capturing regime dynamics through dedicated transition variables.

6.1 Regimes Based on Electoral Legitimation

Regimes grouped under this heading structure authority around electoral procedures as the claimed source of political legitimacy. This electoral legitimation pattern prescribes that the right to rule derives from popular consent expressed through elections, whether genuinely competitive or systematically manipulated. The pattern describes how authority is institutionally organized through electoral mechanisms (parliaments, parties, electoral commissions, voting procedures) rather than whether elections meet democratic standards or generate genuine accountability. A regime holding regular elections for executive and legislative offices exhibits an electoral legitimation pattern regardless of whether those elections are free and fair. This distinguishes electoral regimes from those structured around personalist legitimation (where authority inheres in specific persons or lineages), ideology-centered legitimation (where authority is structured through doctrinal blueprints), institutional legitimation (where authority derives from military command or party hierarchies), or monarchical legitimation (where authority is transmitted through hereditary succession).

Within this pattern, regimes vary dramatically in how electoral procedures function and what role they play in structuring political authority. At one end of the spectrum, liberal democracies establish electoral and liberal legitimation as complementary foundations for political authority. Elections are genuinely competitive, inclusive, and fair, operating alongside robust protections for civil liberties and institutional constraints on executive power. Electoral procedures serve as authentic mechanisms of accountability, with governments subject to removal through popular vote. At the opposite end, electoral autocracies maintain electoral institutions while systematically undermining their competitive character through manipulation, repression, and unfair advantages for incumbents. Elections occur but fail to function as genuine accountability mechanisms. Between these poles lie electoral oligarchies (where participation is severely restricted), electoral hybrid regimes (where substantial deficits undermine but do not entirely eliminate electoral competition), and electoral democracies (where democratic structures persist despite governance shortcomings). The electoral legitimation pattern thus encompasses both regimes where elections genuinely structure authority and those where electoral procedures serve primarily as facades for autocratic rule, united by their institutional organization around electoral claims to legitimacy.

6.1.1 Democracy

Conceptualization: Democratic regimes derive their legitimation from two complementary sources: electoral legitimation and liberal legitimation. This dual foundation distinguishes democracies fundamentally from all other regime types and constitutes the core of democratic governance.

Electoral legitimation establishes that political authority originates from popular consent expressed through competitive elections. In democracies, the right to rule is neither inherited (as in monarchies), nor claimed through ideological orthodoxy (as in ideocracies), institutional control (as in military or one-party regimes), or personal loyalty networks (as in personalist autocracies). Instead, authority is conferred and periodically renewed through elections in which citizens grant or withdraw consent. This creates a chain of accountability from citizens through elections to representatives and ultimately to government. This conceptualization builds on Robert Dahl's (1971) foundational work, which identifies competitive contestation and inclusive participation as the two core dimensions of democratic governance. Following Niklas Luhmann (1969), electoral procedures generate legitimacy not merely through their outcomes but through the participatory process itself: acceptance of electoral results derives from participation in fair procedures. Elections serve as the procedural mechanism through which rulers gain the right to rule and legislators acquire the mandate to legislate. Crucially, this legitimation is temporary and renewable. Governments must return to the electorate for reauthorization, making electoral accountability a central mechanism for regime legitimacy.

Liberal legitimation establishes that political authority derives from the protection of individual freedom, autonomy, and rights. Democratic regimes claim legitimacy not only because they are chosen by the people, but because they safeguard the liberty of citizens against arbitrary power. This includes protection of civil liberties such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, as well as political rights that enable meaningful participation in public life. Liberal legitimation manifests in constitutional constraints on power, the rule of law, and institutional checks and balances that prevent the concentration of authority. An independent judiciary, legislative oversight of the executive, and constitutional guarantees of rights serve to institutionalize this liberal foundation of legitimacy.

These two sources of legitimation are conceptually distinct yet mutually reinforcing. Electoral legitimation without liberal freedoms produces electoral autocracies, where elections occur but

fail to serve as genuine mechanisms of accountability due to repression and manipulation. Liberal constitutionalism without electoral accountability produces regimes that may protect certain freedoms but lack popular authorization. Democratic regimes uniquely combine both: they are legitimate because they are chosen by the people and because they protect the freedom of the people. Following Adam Przeworski (1991: 10), democracy functions when parties lose elections and peacefully transfer power. This commitment by political elites to accept electoral defeat is sustained by the dual legitimation framework: liberal protections ensure that losing power does not mean facing arbitrary persecution, while electoral mechanisms provide future opportunities to regain authority. Elite acceptance of democratic rules, reinforced by protections for defeated actors, is thus fundamental to democratic stability. The synthesis of these two traditions reflects the historical development of liberal democracy in the 19th and 20th centuries (Backes 2000). Early liberalism emphasized constitutional limits on power and protection of individual rights but often restricted suffrage. Democratic movements expanded political participation but initially paid less attention to constraints on majority power. Liberal democracy emerged as the integration of both principles, establishing that legitimate government requires both popular consent through elections and constitutional protection of rights and freedoms.

For this dual legitimation to function effectively, several conditions must be met. Universal suffrage is imperative, ensuring that all adult citizens, irrespective of gender, socioeconomic status, wealth, or literacy levels, possess unequivocal rights to vote, stand for election, and participate in the political process. Elections must be free, fair, and competitive, conducted without substantial impediments and enabling multiple parties or candidates to contest with genuine prospects of attaining power. Civil liberties and political rights must be comprehensively protected, enabling citizens to form opinions, organize politically, and hold government accountable. Institutional constraints on executive power through independent judiciaries and effective legislative oversight prevent the erosion of either electoral or liberal legitimation.

While all democracies share this dual foundation of electoral and liberal legitimation, they vary substantially in how fully they realize these principles in practice. Our detailed classification distinguishes between liberal democracies, which comprehensively uphold both dimensions of democratic legitimation, and electoral democracies, which maintain democratic institutions and the dual legitimation framework but exhibit substantial shortcomings in suffrage inclusiveness, civil liberties protection, or institutional constraints on executive power (Merkel 2004, Bogaards 2009).

6.1.1.1. Liberal Democracy

Conceptualization: Liberal democracy represents the fullest realization of democratic legitimation without substantial deficits in either electoral or liberal dimensions. Where the overarching democracy framework establishes dual legitimation as the defining feature of all democracies, liberal democracies specifically are distinguished by the absence of substantial shortcomings across all four operational dimensions: universal suffrage, electoral quality, civil liberties protection, and institutional constraints on executive power (Merkel 2004).

The distinctive feature of liberal democracy lies in how robustly both legitimation sources function. Electoral legitimation operates without significant impediments: all adult citizens possess equal voting rights, elections are genuinely free and competitive, and electoral outcomes determine governmental composition through transparent procedures. Liberal legitimation is comprehensively institutionalized: civil liberties and political rights receive full protection in practice, judiciary and legislature effectively constrain executive authority, and constitutional limits are observed rather than circumvented. This comprehensiveness across all dimensions generates particularly strong elite commitment to democratic procedures, as defeated actors trust that liberal protections will prevent arbitrary persecution and electoral mechanisms will provide future opportunities to regain power.

Liberal democracies are distinguished from electoral democracies by the threshold at which governance deficits become substantial. Electoral democracies maintain the dual legitimation framework but exhibit significant shortcomings in one or more dimensions: suffrage restrictions (historically through gender or literacy barriers, or through systematic racial disenfranchisement), weakened civil liberties (systematic pressure on media or civil society), or compromised institutional constraints (politicized judiciary, ineffective legislative oversight). The boundary lies where deficits weaken regime legitimacy and elite consensus sufficiently to distinguish the regime from comprehensive liberal democratic governance.

Critical for boundary determination is distinguishing between defensive restrictions protecting constitutional democracy and substantial civil liberties deficits. Liberal democracies may impose narrowly targeted restrictions on anti-democratic extremist parties or organizations that actively seek to abolish democratic order itself, particularly when such restrictions are subject to judicial review and constitutional justification. These defensive measures, grounded in concepts of militant democracy (Loewenstein 1937a, Loewenstein 1937b), do not constitute substantial deficits when: (1) restrictions target only parties or groups explicitly rejecting democratic principles and seeking regime overthrow, (2) bans are imposed through constitutional processes with judicial oversight rather than executive discretion, (3) restrictions remain narrow and exceptional rather than becoming generalized tools for suppressing legitimate opposition,

and (4) banned parties command minimal electoral support such that restrictions do not fundamentally alter competitive dynamics. However, when bans target parties with substantial electoral support (typically above 5-10% vote share), even if justified on extremism grounds, the restriction on electoral pluralism creates a substantial deficit distinguishing the regime from full liberal democracy. The prohibition of a party representing significant segments of the electorate, regardless of constitutional justification, constrains the comprehensiveness of electoral and liberal legitimation by preventing meaningful political representation of substantial constituencies and limiting ideological pluralism in ways that weaken democratic quality without necessarily transitioning the regime to electoral democracy if other dimensions remain robust. Isolated incidents of rights violations or institutional friction do not constitute substantial deficits; systematic patterns of executive pressure on courts, persistent constraints on opposition organizing, or recurring failures of checks and balances indicate transition to electoral democracy. Cases where substantial deficits exist across multiple dimensions simultaneously, particularly combining suffrage restrictions with systematic civil liberties violations, may approach the boundary with electoral hybrid regimes where liberal legitimation becomes critically weakened rather than merely reduced.

Liberal democracies are distinguished from electoral oligarchies through universal suffrage. Electoral oligarchies systematically restrict the franchise to a narrow elite through property requirements, literacy tests (particularly when literacy rates are low), racial exclusions, or other discriminatory barriers that reduce the enfranchised population to a small segment of society. While these regimes may maintain constitutional constraints on executive power and relatively free competition among the enfranchised, the systematic exclusion of large population segments from electoral legitimation places them outside the democratic category. Liberal democracies require effective universal adult suffrage: all adult citizens must possess equal voting rights without substantial legal or practical restrictions. Gender-based suffrage restrictions alone constitute fundamental violations of universal participation; historical regimes with male-only suffrage do not qualify as liberal democracies regardless of other institutional features.

Operationalization: A regime is classified as liberal democracy when it meets high thresholds across four core dimensions simultaneously. Substantial deficits in any single dimension result in classification as electoral democracy; cumulative deficits across multiple dimensions or severe deficits in electoral quality itself result in classification as hybrid regime or electoral autocracy, depending on severity.

Universal suffrage: All adult citizens possess equal rights to vote and stand for election without significant legal or practical restrictions. Gender-based suffrage restrictions, literacy tests,

property requirements, racial exclusions, poll taxes, or other mechanisms that substantially limit electoral participation disqualify a regime from liberal democracy classification. Formal constitutional guarantees must be implemented effectively in practice; de jure universal suffrage combined with de facto disenfranchisement through intimidation, administrative barriers, or systematic obstacles constitutes a deficit. We assess this dimension through direct examination of suffrage laws, electoral participation patterns, and systematic exclusions, drawing on historical and legal scholarship on voting rights.

Electoral quality: Elections are free, fair, and competitive. Multiple parties contest elections with genuine prospects of winning, electoral processes are transparent and widely accepted as legitimate, vote counting is accurate without manipulation, and opposition parties can campaign freely and access media. We assess electoral quality through direct observation of electoral processes, institutional functioning, and political competition patterns, cross-validating our assessments with Freedom House evaluations, V-Dem clean elections indices, and LIED data where available. For many historical cases and small states, quantitative indicators do not exist, requiring reliance on election observer reports, academic literature, and qualitative evidence. Systematic advantages for governing parties through media bias or unequal resource access may be present in electoral democracies but should not fundamentally undermine competition or predetermine outcomes in liberal democracies.

Civil liberties and political rights: Freedom of expression, assembly, association, and media are comprehensively protected in both law and practice. Civil society operates without significant government interference, citizens can criticize government without fear of retribution, and media maintains independence from government control. Narrowly targeted restrictions on anti-democratic extremist parties or organizations explicitly seeking to abolish constitutional order do not constitute substantial deficits when imposed through constitutional processes with judicial oversight and when targeting only marginal political forces. However, bans on parties with substantial electoral support (typically 5-10%+ vote share) create constraints on ideological pluralism that, while potentially justified on constitutional grounds, represent departures from the comprehensive civil liberties protection characteristic of full liberal democracy. We evaluate this dimension through direct assessment of civil liberties protection in practice, cross-validating with Freedom House ratings (liberal democracies typically score „Free“ with ratings of 1.0-2.5) and V-Dem indicators on civil liberties, media freedom, and civil society space where available. For many cases, particularly historical regimes and small states, such quantitative indicators do not exist, necessitating qualitative assessment of specific restrictions and their scope. Isolated incidents of rights violations do not disqualify liberal democracy classification;

systematic patterns of censorship, harassment, or regulatory pressure on opposition and media indicate electoral democracy.

Institutional constraints on executive power: The executive is effectively constrained by independent judiciary and empowered legislature. Judicial review functions without political interference, judicial appointments and decisions are not systematically politicized, legislative oversight is meaningful and not circumvented through emergency powers or procedural manipulation, and constitutional limits on executive authority are observed. We assess institutional constraints through direct observation of executive-judicial-legislative interactions and constitutional practice, cross-validating with Polity's executive constraints indicator (liberal democracies typically score 6-7) and V-Dem indicators on judicial independence, legislative constraints, and executive corruption where available. For cases where quantitative indicators are absent, we rely on constitutional analysis, institutional scholarship, and qualitative evidence of constraint mechanisms. Occasional executive-legislative tensions or isolated judicial decisions favoring government do not constitute substantial deficits; systematic patterns of executive dominance, court-packing, or circumvention of parliamentary procedures indicate electoral democracy.

A regime must meet high standards across all four dimensions simultaneously to qualify as liberal democracy. Deficits that fall short of „substantial“ (isolated incidents, temporary tensions, minor irregularities that do not materially affect outcomes, or narrowly targeted restrictions on marginal anti-democratic forces) do not disqualify liberal democracy classification. Substantial deficits in one dimension result in electoral democracy classification; substantial deficits in multiple dimensions or severe deficits in electoral quality itself result in hybrid regime or electoral autocracy classification.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Norway (1913-present, excluding 1940-1945 German occupation regime) exemplifies liberal democracy through comprehensive realization of all four dimensions. Following the introduction of universal adult suffrage in 1913, all citizens possess equal rights to participate without restrictions. Elections are consistently free, fair, and highly competitive, with multiple parties regularly contesting and frequent alternation of power. Civil liberties receive robust protection, media operates independently, and civil society is vibrant. Institutional constraints function effectively with independent judiciary and meaningful parliamentary oversight. Freedom House consistently rates Norway as „Free“ (score 1.0). The combination of these features across all dimensions over more than a century places Norway squarely within liberal democracy classification.

Sweden (1921-present) demonstrates sustained liberal democracy following the achievement of universal suffrage. Competitive multiparty elections regularly produce alternation between Social Democrats and center-right coalitions, civil liberties are comprehensively protected, and institutional constraints operate effectively through independent judiciary and parliamentary oversight.

Just-inside Cases: West Germany (1949-late 1960s) illustrates a just-in case where constitutional defense measures created civil liberties constraints distinguishing the regime from full liberal democracy despite meeting high standards in other dimensions. Universal suffrage was established and elections were consistently free, fair, and competitive with genuine alternation between CDU and SPD occurring. Institutional constraints functioned robustly with the Federal Constitutional Court exercising independent judicial review. However, substantial restrictions on freedom of association existed: the Communist Party (KPD) was banned in 1956 after securing 2.2% in the 1953 federal election, the Socialist Reich Party (SRP) was banned in 1952, and Berufsverbot policies restricted public employment for individuals with alleged extremist affiliations (Major 1997). While these measures were justified as constitutional defense against anti-democratic forces and imposed through judicial processes (Constitutional Court rulings), the KPD ban in particular removed a party with non-negligible electoral support and representation in state parliaments, constraining ideological pluralism beyond marginal extremist forces. The combination of party bans affecting parties with some electoral presence and systematic employment restrictions on political grounds created civil liberties deficits that, while defensible as militant democracy measures, prevented full liberal democracy classification during this period. The classification as borderline liberal democracy rather than electoral democracy rested on: (1) restrictions were narrowly targeted at specific extremist ideologies rather than creating generalized constraints on opposition, (2) banned parties represented relatively small electoral constituencies (under 5% nationally), (3) other dimensions (universal suffrage, electoral quality, institutional constraints) met high liberal democratic standards, and (4) electoral competition remained robust with major parties competing freely. Transition to unambiguous liberal democracy occurred through gradual liberalization during the late 1960s-1970s as Cold War tensions eased and restrictions were relaxed.

United States (1965-2024) approached the boundary with electoral democracy through periodic tensions. Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965, effective universal suffrage was achieved. However, practical barriers (voter ID laws post-Shelby County v. Holder 2013, registration obstacles, gerrymandering) created recurring concerns without rising to systematic disenfranchisement. Electoral quality remained high with competitive elections and regular alternation.

Civil liberties were generally protected, though security concerns (post-9/11 surveillance) created temporary tensions. Institutional constraints functioned effectively with independent judiciary and congressional oversight. The classification as liberal democracy rested on deficits not reaching substantial thresholds. Transition to electoral democracy in 2025 occurred when institutional constraints weakened substantially through systematic executive pressure on judiciary and persistent attacks on media independence (Levitsky/Ziblatt 2018, Levitsky/Ziblatt 2023) #3102}.

Just-outside Cases: Defective democracies such as Poland under Law and Justice (PiS) government (2015-2023) maintained competitive elections meeting minimal standards but exhibited substantial deficits distinguishing them from liberal democracy. Elections remained free and fair with genuine alternation occurring (2023 parliamentary elections produced opposition victory). However, substantial deficits in institutional constraints (disciplinary chambers targeting judges, Constitutional Tribunal manipulation) and civil liberties (advertising taxation targeting critical outlets, public media transformation into government megaphones) weakened liberal legitimation. Courts still occasionally ruled against government and opposition maintained strong institutional presence, indicating reduced but operative liberal legitimation rather than critically weakened liberal legitimation characteristic of hybrid regimes.

Electoral oligarchies such as United States (1776-1920) systematically excluded the majority through suffrage restrictions while maintaining constitutional constraints and competition among the enfranchised elite. Property requirements, literacy tests, racial intimidation, and complete exclusion of women restricted participation to small minorities. The 15th Amendment (1870) was systematically undermined through Jim Crow laws and violence. Transition to electoral democracy occurred through women's suffrage (19th Amendment, 1920) (Keyssar 2000), though substantial racial disenfranchisement persisted until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

6.1.1.2 Electoral Democracy

Conceptualization: Electoral democracies instantiate the dual legitimation architecture that defines all democracies (electoral and liberal) but exhibit incomplete realization of the liberal component. Electoral legitimation achieves full realization through near-universal adult suffrage (>80% enfranchised) and elections that serve as genuine authorization mechanisms with outcomes not predetermined and alternation possible. Liberal legitimation, while present and operative in routine matters, remains systematically weaker than in liberal democracies: constitutional constraints cannot reliably counterbalance electoral mandates in politically

consequential cases, rights protections lack effective enforcement mechanisms, or horizontal accountability institutions prove structurally insufficient to constrain executive power on sensitive issues.

The term electoral democracy reflects that electoral authorization functions comprehensively while liberal-constitutional constraint operates with systematically reduced structural capacity. Electoral procedures provide the primary basis for political authority and competition is genuine. Liberal constraints exist formally and function in routine administrative matters, but systematically fail to constrain elected power when political stakes are high. This asymmetry between robust electoral authorization and insufficient liberal constraint distinguishes electoral from liberal democracy, where both legitimation sources achieve full and reliable realization. Electoral democracies manifest this pattern through weak institutional capacity of liberal-constitutional constraints despite universal suffrage. Courts may rule independently on routine administrative matters yet remain vulnerable to political interference on sensitive cases. Media outlets operate with formal freedom yet face systematic pressure through advertising withdrawal, ownership concentration, or regulatory harassment. Citizens participate in elections under conditions structured by severe incumbency advantages, unequal access to resources, or administrative burdens imposed on opposition. These patterns weaken the reliability of liberal constraint without eliminating pluralism or making electoral outcomes predetermined.

The upper boundary toward liberal democracy is reached when liberal constraints achieve reliable capacity to counterbalance electoral mandates across all issue domains, including politically sensitive cases. The downward boundary toward electoral hybrid regimes is defined by a qualitative transformation in how authority is reproduced: electoral democracies presuppose that opposition participation remains legally secure even when materially disadvantaged, incumbency advantages remain contingent and reversible through voter choice, and electoral uncertainty remains endogenous to voter preferences. The transition to electoral hybrid occurs when systematic pressure migrates from the liberal environment into the electoral machinery itself, when electoral management bodies lose structural autonomy becoming functionally subordinated to executive control, and when liberal institutions lose strategic relevance for opposition actors despite formal existence.

Historically, electoral democracies bordered downward on electoral oligarchies through the suffrage inclusiveness dimension. This boundary is particularly salient for regimes that achieved universal male suffrage but systematically excluded women from political participation. The exclusion of approximately half the adult population through gender-based restrictions represents severe incompleteness in both electoral and liberal legitimation, placing

such regimes at the absolute borderline between electoral democracy and electoral oligarchy. In Va-PoReg's main classification, such cases with <80% adult enfranchisement are classified as Electoral Oligarchy (Section 6.1.3.1).

Electoral democracies display path-dependent vulnerability to further erosion. The coexistence of genuine electoral competition with incomplete liberal legitimation generates incentives for incumbents to consolidate advantage gradually. Because elections remain competitive, incumbents cannot rely on overt repression or electoral fraud without risking international sanctions or domestic backlash. Instead, they exploit institutional ambiguities, concentrate media ownership, weaken judicial independence, and deploy state resources for partisan advantage. These incremental steps preserve the appearance of democratic competition while systematically tilting the playing field. Electoral democracies thus often exhibit creeping autocratization rather than abrupt collapse, making gradual degradation toward hybrid regimes a recurrent trajectory.

Operationalization: A regime is classified as electoral democracy when two conditions hold simultaneously and persistently. Both conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient: regimes failing either are reclassified upward (to liberal democracy if structural insufficiency is eliminated) or downward (to electoral hybrid regimes if electoral competitiveness is undermined or to electoral oligarchy if suffrage is systematically restricted).

First, elections must be genuinely competitive in the sense that outcomes are not predetermined, alternation remains possible, and opposition participation is meaningful. Electoral competitiveness requires that multiple parties or candidates contest with realistic prospects of winning, that vote counting is sufficiently accurate and transparent to reflect preferences, and that defeated incumbents transfer power. This distinguishes electoral democracies from electoral autocracies and hybrid regimes where elections serve primarily as legitimation rituals rather than authorization mechanisms.

Second, incomplete realization must exist in at least one dimension of liberal legitimation, while near-universal adult suffrage (>80% of adult population legally entitled to vote) is maintained. These dimensions are analytically distinct yet mutually reinforcing components of democratic legitimation:

Civil liberties and political rights: Incomplete realization in this dimension arises when freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and media are constrained by systematic harassment, legal restrictions, ownership concentration, or selective enforcement that creates pervasive self-censorship or unequal political participation. Substantial incompleteness manifests through patterns such as repeated prosecutions of journalists on spurious charges, systematic tax audits or regulatory harassment of opposition media, advertising boycotts coordinated by

state-influenced firms, concentration of media ownership among government allies, restrictions on civil society funding or registration, or repeated use of security forces to disperse peaceful opposition gatherings. In electoral democracies, opposition faces material disadvantages but retains legal security; the boundary to electoral hybrid is crossed when the state systematically criminalizes opposition through misuse of agent laws, anti-terrorism statutes, or other non-electoral legislation. The constraint must be systematic rather than episodic: occasional prosecutions or isolated incidents do not constitute substantial incompleteness, but patterns that demonstrably restrict opposition organizing or critical journalism do.

Institutional constraints on executive power: This dimension encompasses judicial independence and legislative oversight capacity. Incomplete realization occurs when courts face systematic political pressure yet retain capacity to occasionally constrain executive action on politically consequential matters, including electoral integrity. Electoral management bodies maintain structural autonomy despite political pressures. Formal independence does not suffice; the decisive criterion is functional decision-making autonomy during critical electoral phases. Observable indicators include repeated executive refusal to comply with unfavorable court rulings, politicized appointment or removal of judges, court-packing that undermines judicial independence, executive dominance over legislative agendas that eliminates meaningful deliberation, or constitutional changes that concentrate power while maintaining electoral facades. Liberal institutions retain strategic relevance when opposition actors invest resources in institutional arenas rather than systematically relying on extra-institutional mobilization or exile strategies. The boundary to electoral hybrid is crossed when these institutions become functionally irrelevant for opposition strategies despite formal existence, and when incumbency advantages shift from contingent and reversible to structural and administratively stabilized.

These dimensions can be incompletely realized individually or in combination. A regime qualifies as electoral democracy if substantial incompleteness exists in any single dimension, even if the other dimension functions robustly. The assessment prioritizes institutional patterns and their effects on democratic functioning over mechanical scoring. Classification rests fundamentally on qualitative assessment of legitimation patterns through the criteria established above.

The upper threshold to liberal democracy is reached when liberal constraints achieve reliable capacity to counterbalance electoral mandates across all issue domains, including politically sensitive cases. The downward threshold to electoral hybrid regime is crossed when the systematic pressure described in the conceptualization section migrates into electoral machinery itself, fundamentally altering the authorization mechanism. Elections remain formally multi-party with opposition participation, but systematic manipulation through electoral

administration bias, severe resource asymmetries, intimidation, or media control substantially predetermines outcomes (Levitsky/Way 2010). The electoral mechanism retains procedural form but loses genuine authorization function, as incumbents can reliably reproduce their power through formally competitive but substantively managed elections. The downward threshold to electoral oligarchy is crossed when suffrage restrictions reduce the enfranchised population below ~80% of adults, typically through systematic exclusion of major population segments such as women, racial groups, or property-based restrictions (Dahl 1971).

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases: Slovakia (1994-1998) under Vladimír Mečiar exemplifies electoral democracy through systematic impairment of institutional constraints and civil liberties while electoral competition persisted. Parliamentary elections remained competitive with multiple parties contesting, and the 1998 elections produced genuine alternation when a broad opposition coalition defeated Mečiar's HZDS despite its control of state resources. However, state television and radio were systematically politicized to favor the government, with opposition parties receiving minimal airtime and critical journalists dismissed or reassigned. The Slovak Information Service conducted surveillance of opposition politicians and journalists. Mečiar's government repeatedly circumvented parliament through executive decrees and attempted to undermine the Constitutional Court's authority when it ruled against government actions. Privatization processes systematically favored firms connected to government officials. Yet opposition parties organized freely despite harassment, civil society remained active in mobilizing voters, and the electoral system functioned with sufficient integrity that voters removed Mečiar through the ballot box (Fisher 2006).

Colombia (1990s-2000s) demonstrates electoral democracy in a context of endemic violence and weak state capacity. Presidential and legislative elections were competitive with alternation between parties and the emergence of new political forces. Electoral administration was generally professional and large-scale fraud limited at the national level. However, the liberal pillar was severely compromised by armed groups operating across the territory. Paramilitaries and guerrilla groups systematically assassinated mayors, city council members, and congressional candidates. Over 3,000 local politicians were murdered between 1988 and 2006, creating vast rural areas where opposition could not campaign safely. Journalists investigating paramilitary links faced systematic threats. The judiciary functioned with formal independence but judges faced assassination when handling sensitive cases, leading to massive backlogs and impunity rates exceeding 95 percent. Despite these severe deficits in civil liberties and citizen security,

the electoral system continued to produce meaningful contestation and alternation at the national level (Gutiérrez Sanín 2007).

Sri Lanka (2005-2014) under Mahinda Rajapaksa illustrates executive dominance eroding institutional constraints while electoral competition persisted. Rajapaksa consolidated power through the 18th Amendment (2010), which eliminated presidential term limits, weakened judicial independence, and expanded presidential authority over key appointments. The impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake in 2013 exemplified executive interference: after she ruled against a government bill, parliament conducted a rushed impeachment proceeding that violated due process. State media systematically favored the government while independent outlets faced pressure. Yet opposition parties continued to organize, and the 2015 presidential election produced alternation when Maithripala Sirisena's coalition defeated Rajapaksa despite massive use of state resources (DeVotta 2009).

Just-inside Cases: Turkey (2010-2013) represents a just-inside case approaching the downward threshold toward electoral hybrid regime. During this period, AKP governments under Erdoğan continued to face genuine electoral competition, with the 2011 parliamentary elections showing robust opposition and municipal elections producing mixed outcomes with opposition victories in major cities. However, systematic erosion of liberal guarantees accelerated dramatically. Turkey led the world in imprisoned journalists by 2012. The Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials saw hundreds convicted based on questionable evidence. Media ownership became increasingly concentrated among firms dependent on government contracts. The 2013 Gezi Park protests revealed systematic use of excessive police force. Courts showed declining independence in politically sensitive cases.

These deficits placed Turkey near the boundary between electoral democracy and electoral hybrid regime. The decisive factor maintaining electoral democracy classification through 2013 was that electoral alternation remained conceivable and municipal elections produced genuine opposition victories. The threshold was crossed after 2014 when systematic manipulation of electoral administration through purges and emergency powers, combined with comprehensive media capture and judicial subordination, rendered competition substantively non-authorizing despite formal contestation (Levitsky/Way 2010ID, Esen/Gümüüşçü 2017).

Just-outside Cases: India (1947-2019) long represented a paradigmatic electoral democracy combining robust electoral competition with persistent liberal deficits. Elections were genuinely competitive with frequent alternation at both national and state levels, high turnout rates regularly exceeding 60 percent, and an Election Commission maintaining administrative integrity. The 2004, 2009, and 2014 elections all produced decisive outcomes with genuine

competition. However, substantial deficits persisted across dimensions: pervasive corruption undermining equal access to state resources and justice, communal violence with documented state complicity (2002 Gujarat riots), police excessive force with limited accountability, massive judicial backlogs limiting effective rights protection, and regional bosses operating through patronage networks in multiple states.

Since 2014, pressures on media independence, civil society organizations, and minority rights intensified dramatically under Modi governments. Major media houses facing government pressure increasingly practiced self-censorship. Kashmir's special constitutional status was revoked in 2019 with mass detentions and communications blackout lasting months. NGOs working on sensitive issues faced funding restrictions and legal harassment. Courts showed declining willingness to constrain executive action on politically sensitive matters. However, elections continued to produce meaningful contestation with opposition victories in multiple states through 2019, maintaining India's classification as electoral democracy.

The critical threshold was crossed after 2019 when the systematic concentration of executive power, erosion of judicial independence through politicized appointments, and comprehensive repression of civil society curtailed substantive competition. Freedom House downgraded India from „Free“ to „Partly Free“ in 2020. The 2024 electoral manipulation through selective disqualification of opposition candidates, frozen bank accounts of the main opposition party, and systematic use of investigative agencies against political opponents rendered elections formally competitive but substantively predetermined. India thus transitioned from long-standing electoral democracy into electoral hybrid regime, illustrating the path-dependent vulnerability characteristic of electoral democracies: gradual consolidation of incumbent advantage under persistent illiberal conditions culminated in hybridization (Jaffrelot 2021).

Indonesia (after 2004) illustrates the upward transition from defective to liberal democracy. Following Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesia initially exhibited substantial deficits: military political privileges, endemic judicial corruption, regional violence, and local boss control of elections. However, constitutional reforms in 2001-2002 eliminated military reserved seats and strengthened institutional checks. Direct presidential elections beginning in 2004 enhanced accountability. The Corruption Eradication Commission demonstrated genuine independence by successfully prosecuting high-level officials. Judicial reforms strengthened the Constitutional Court. Media pluralism flourished. By the mid-2000s, these cumulative improvements eliminated substantial deficits, transitioning Indonesia upward into liberal democracy (Mietzner 2012).

Venezuela (after 2006) demonstrates the downward transition from electoral democracy to an electoral hybrid regime and eventually electoral autocracy. Initially operating as electoral democracy with competitive elections but weakening institutional constraints, the decisive downward shift occurred after 2006 when escalating manipulation undermined electoral competitiveness itself. The National Electoral Council became systematically biased. State resources were massively deployed through social programs conditioned on political loyalty. Opposition media were systematically closed. Electoral districts were gerrymandered to favor the PSUV. Under Maduro, manipulation intensified: major opposition leaders were imprisoned or barred, hyperinflation prevented effective opposition mobilization. Elections no longer functioned as genuine authorization mechanisms (Corrales 2015).

Hungary (after 2018) similarly illustrates downward transition through systematic institutional capture. Initially a electoral democracy, the Orbán government systematically captured independent institutions after securing repeated two-thirds majorities. Constitutional amendments forced judicial retirements enabling loyalist appointments. Electoral laws gerrymandered districts to favor Fidesz. State advertising was redirected to government-friendly media. By the late 2010s, competition became non-credible despite formal multi-party elections, transforming liberal deficits into electoral ones (Scheppelle 2013).

Aggregation of Democracy Types Across Classification Variables

vaporeg_regtype_reports / vaporeg_regtype_detailed

10 Liberal Democracy

20 Electoral democracy

→ Differentiated by democratic quality; transitions between them count as regime change.

vaporeg_regtype_compact

10 Democracy

→ Combines Liberal and Electoral democracy for simplified comparisons.

vaporeg_regtype_quadruple / vaporeg_regtype_triple

1 Democracy

→ Both types merged; used in fourfold and threefold typologies to distinguish broader regime families.

vaporeg_regtype_bindem

1 Democracy (Liberal + Defective)

0 Non-democracy

→ Basic dichotomy; „No Central Authority” = 0, „Part of Other Country” = missing.

6.1.2. Electoral Oligarchy

Conceptualization: Electoral oligarchy constitutes a distinct legitimation pattern characterized by systematic exclusion of substantial population segments from political participation. Authority derives from a legally restricted segment of the adult population through formal barriers: gender restrictions, racial or ethnic exclusions, property qualifications, literacy requirements, or combinations thereof. Historical regimes frequently employed compounded exclusions: gender-based restrictions (typically excluding all women), elevated age thresholds (voting age 21-30 rather than contemporary norms of 18), property qualifications, and racial limitations. Using contemporary international standards (adulthood at 18), such compounded restrictions often limited enfranchisement to 20-40% of adults, with male-suffrage-only regimes representing the upper boundary of this pattern at approximately 40-45% of adults aged 18+ (or approximately 50% of adults at the regime's typically higher voting age threshold). The restriction is not incidental but constitutive: legitimation intentionally operates through a privileged segment rather than aspiring to universal citizenship. This exclusion is typically justified through stewardship claims grounded in property ownership, educational attainment, gender-based capacity arguments, or presumed competence (Rueschemeyer/Huber Stephens/Stephens 1992).

The defining feature of electoral oligarchy lies in its institutional architecture: functioning representative institutions (including empowered legislatures, independent judiciaries, and constrained executives) operate authentically but remain accessible exclusively to the enfranchised segment. Electoral oligarchies may maintain competitive elections and exhibit robust liberal-constitutional institutions, but only for those legally entitled to participate. Following Dahl's (1971) framework, these regimes combine high public contestation with limited inclusiveness: what Dahl termed competitive oligarchy to distinguish from polyarchy, which requires both contestation and broad participation. Dahl's paradigmatic cases (19th-century Britain and United States with property restrictions) enfranchised perhaps 20-30% of adults. Male-suffrage-only regimes without property restrictions, enfranchising approximately 40-45% of adults aged 18+ through systematic gender-based exclusion, represent the upper boundary of this pattern: substantial exclusion remains, but the scale approaches the threshold where oligarchic participation transitions toward mass democracy. This legitimation pattern decisively shapes elite structures, restricting political composition to a narrow, legally defined class while fostering cohesion through consensus on preserving the exclusionary system itself. Elite factions

compete vigorously within established constitutional parameters while maintaining fundamental agreement on excluding the disenfranchised groups.

The boundary with electoral democracy is crossed when suffrage expansion eliminates systematic gender-based political exclusion, transitioning from patriarchal oligarchy to gender-inclusive democracy. Male-suffrage-only regimes constituted patriarchal oligarchies in which women, comprising approximately half of all adults, faced systematic legal exclusion not merely from voting but from the full range of political participation: eligibility for office, access to leadership positions, and often core civil rights including property ownership, contractual capacity, and legal autonomy. Political authority derived exclusively from male citizens, with legislatures, executives, and judiciaries composed entirely of men exercising power over a population half of whom were legally subordinated.

This systematic exclusion cannot be characterized as marginal or incidental. Male-suffrage-only regimes with voting age 21-25 enfranchised approximately 40-45% of adults aged 18+, but more fundamentally, they restricted political eligibility and leadership to men alone. The patriarchal character of legitimation (authority derived from and exercised by men, with women systematically excluded from political agency) defines these regimes as oligarchies regardless of how robustly democratic institutions functioned among enfranchised men. Britain's Parliament until 1918 comprised exclusively men legislating for a population half female. Switzerland's federal government until 1971 derived authority solely from male citizens while exercising power over women who possessed neither voting rights nor eligibility for office.

The transition to electoral democracy requires women's enfranchisement and eligibility for office, eliminating the patriarchal restriction of political authority to male citizens. The shift is structural (from male-only to gender-inclusive political elites).

The boundary with electoral oligarchic autocracy is crossed when liberal legitimation within the enfranchised segment collapses. In electoral oligarchy, competition among those enfranchised remains genuine and the executive is effectively constrained by functioning liberal-constitutional rules. In electoral oligarchic autocracy, while suffrage remains restricted, intra-elite competition becomes façade, judicial independence is systematically nullified, and executive power operates without meaningful constraint despite formal institutional structures (Ziblatt 2017).

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as electoral oligarchy when it simultaneously satisfies two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. First, political authority must be de jure or de facto confined to a legally defined and systematically privileged segment of the adult population. Suffrage restrictions must operate as a constitutive principle of legitimation rather than as

incidental distortions or low participation resulting from apathy or boycott. Exclusionary mechanisms include gender-based restrictions, property or income qualifications, literacy requirements, racial or ethnic exclusions, poll taxes, or combinations thereof. The decisive criterion is the institutionalized restriction of sovereignty to a legally circumscribed segment rather than mere variation in participation rates. As an empirical guideline, regimes in which legal or effective barriers confine the enfranchised population to roughly one half or less of the adult population qualify as electoral oligarchies. This threshold serves as a heuristic indicator of structurally restricted inclusion and does not override qualitative assessment of the exclusionary architecture.

Second, among the enfranchised segment, the regime must function as a liberal or electoral democracy. Competitive elections must be meaningful, integrity must be preserved, and alternation in power must be realistically possible. Core civil liberties such as expression, association, and assembly must be protected for those legally recognized as full political members, and executive authority must be constrained by functioning constitutional institutions, including an empowered legislature and an independent judiciary. Crucially, these guarantees apply asymmetrically. The enfranchised segment enjoys full political rights, eligibility for office, access to public authority, and effective legal protection, whereas the excluded population lacks not only voting rights but also equal political standing, eligibility for leadership positions, and often full civil autonomy. The regime therefore institutionalizes a dual structure of citizenship: liberal-constitutional governance within a privileged segment and systematic political subordination of those excluded from membership.

Both conditions must be satisfied simultaneously for electoral oligarchy classification. Failure of the first condition results in classification as electoral democracy or hybrid regime depending on the breadth of inclusion. Failure of the second condition, while maintaining structurally restricted suffrage, results in classification as electoral oligarchic autocracy.

Examples

Paradigmatic Case: The United Kingdom (1832-1867) represents a classic property-based electoral oligarchy. The Great Reform Act of 1832 rationalized the electoral system but maintained stringent property qualifications, restricting the franchise to approximately 18% of adult males (all women excluded). Within this narrow propertied elite, robust competition occurred between Whigs and Tories, with strong parliamentary constraints on the executive and an independent judiciary. This period exemplifies the dual structure: genuine constitutionalism and political competition for the enfranchised minority alongside the systematic legal exclusion of the vast majority of the adult population based on property and gender (Brock 1972).

Just-inside Cases: The United Kingdom (1867-1918) illustrates the transition from electoral oligarchy toward electoral democracy. The Second and Third Reform Acts (1867, 1884) significantly expanded the male franchise, moving the effective electorate from under 20% to over 60% of the adult male population (though all women remained excluded). This period is borderline because it tests the 40-50% threshold and the „exclusion of women alone” rule. While the post-1884 electorate likely exceeded 50% of the *adult population*, the combination of remaining property qualifications for men and the complete exclusion of women creates ambiguity. The regime maintained robust elite constitutionalism, but the expanding franchise places it at the upper boundary of the category, soon to transition into a electoral democracy with the inclusion of women (Pugh 1978).

Just-outside Cases: Electoral oligarchic autocracies such as Brazil (1889-1930) contrast with paradigmatic electoral oligarchy by failing the elite constitutionalism criterion despite meeting suffrage restrictions. Brazil's „Old Republic“ maintained suffrage restricted through literacy requirements (approximately 2-3% of population enfranchised), satisfying the first criterion. However, it failed the second criterion for genuine liberal competition. The „politics of the governors“ (política dos governadores) and „coffee with milk“ politics (café com leite) constituted an institutionalized autocratic cartel rather than genuine competition. State-level oligarchs predetermined outcomes through electoral fraud and violence, voiding meaningful constitutional constraints (Leal 1977).

Electoral democracies such as India (1950-2019) represent the opposite legitimation pattern to electoral oligarchy. From its founding, India was based on universal adult suffrage without property, literacy, or gender barriers, establishing procedural inclusiveness as foundational principle. Despite persistent liberal deficits (corruption, weak rule of law, communal violence), its institutional framework is one of mass inclusion rather than elite exclusion. This demonstrates the critical boundary: electoral democracies include the masses procedurally but fail them substantively through weak liberal protections; electoral oligarchies exclude the masses procedurally by design while maintaining strong liberal protections for the enfranchised elite (Jaffrelot 2021).

Electoral autocracies such as contemporary Malaysia (1980s-2010s) contrast with electoral oligarchy on both criteria. Malaysia maintained universal suffrage without systematic legal restrictions excluding large population segments (lacking first criterion), but its elections featured systematic malapportionment, gerrymandering, and media control that prevented genuine competition. The fundamental difference in legitimation patterns remains clear: electoral oligarchy features genuine competition and constitutional rule for a legally restricted elite; electoral

autocracy features manipulated competition despite formally universal participation (Case 1993, Case 1996).

6.1.3. Electoral Hybrid Regime

Conceptualization: Electoral hybrid regimes represent a critical transition in legitimation patterns where liberal legitimation (constitutional constraints, judicial independence, civil liberties protecting minority rights) has become critically weakened while electoral legitimation (majority-based authorization through competitive elections), though still present, becomes increasingly compromised and supplemented by emerging institutional claims. Authority is structured through electoral procedures that retain some legitimating capacity but operate with severely reduced liberal constraints, creating an institutional architecture where ruling parties claim authority through dual sources: managed electoral victories and growing institutional status as guarantors of performance, stability, or national interest (Levitsky/Way 2010, Diamond 2002). Electoral hybrid regimes emerge when the three functional transformations described in Electoral Democracy (Section 6.1.1.2) have been completed simultaneously. This creates a distinctive legitimation pattern characterized by „pluralism by default” (Way 2015b), where ruling parties maintain competitive electoral procedures not from democratic conviction but from insufficient capacity to establish complete authoritarian control. Opposition persistence reflects incumbent weakness rather than democratic tolerance: ruling elites cannot fully eliminate opposition competition despite preferring monopolistic control, resulting in contested but systematically unfair electoral competition. This dynamic operates bidirectionally, as hybrids may emerge from democratic erosion where ruling parties gain manipulation capacity but cannot eliminate institutional constraints entirely, or from authoritarian weakening where ruling parties lose capacity for total control but retain systematic advantages.

The decisive distinction between electoral democracies, hybrids, and autocracies lies in institutional effectiveness as paths to power. Electoral democracies feature institutional arenas that function as sufficient paths to alternation. Electoral hybrids feature institutional arenas that retain necessary but not sufficient capacity for power transfer, sustained through pluralism by default where ruling party manipulation capacity prevents fair competition but insufficient authoritarian capacity prevents complete institutional capture. Electoral autocracies feature institutional arenas that function as neither necessary nor sufficient paths to alternation, becoming ritualized facades. This distinction captures the gradual erosion or restoration of electoral authorization without creating arbitrary quantitative thresholds.

In electoral hybrids, institutional arenas retain residual functions (generating visibility, recruiting elites, signaling legitimacy, mobilizing international attention, or exploiting regime crises) but lose their primacy as direct paths to executive power. This institutional persistence reflects structural limitations on authoritarian consolidation transmitted through institutional constraints: ruling parties lack sufficient capacity to neutralize electoral administration autonomy completely, eliminate opposition legal protections entirely, or render liberal institutions completely irrelevant. This creates trajectory uncertainty where hybrids may move toward electoral autocracy if ruling party capacity increases sufficiently to complete institutional capture, or toward electoral democracy if ruling party capacity weakens or institutional effectiveness is restored.

Operationalization: An electoral regime is classified as hybrid when the three functional transformations outlined in Electoral Democracy have occurred simultaneously.

Secondary interpretive criteria may be applied in borderline cases where institutional evidence is ambiguous. Opposition strategic orientation can serve as a plausibility check: whether opposition actors systematically combine institutional participation with extra-institutional strategies (street mobilization, international advocacy, crisis exploitation) rather than relying primarily on electoral competition, and whether opposition appears to expect that institutional channels alone cannot produce alternation even under optimal conditions. This criterion serves as interpretive guidance rather than primary classification standard.

Classification rests fundamentally on qualitative assessment of institutional functionality. The regime must demonstrate that institutional arenas retain necessary but not sufficient capacity for power transfer, distinguishing hybrids from democracies (where institutions remain sufficient) and autocracies (where institutions become neither necessary nor sufficient).

The upper threshold to electoral democracy is reached when institutional arenas regain sufficient effectiveness such that opposition can reasonably expect success through primarily institutional strategies. The downward threshold to electoral autocracy is crossed when institutional arenas lose even their necessary capacity, such that electoral outcomes become substantially predetermined regardless of competition or mobilization.

The downward threshold to electoral oligarchy occurs through suffrage restriction rather than institutional effectiveness. Oligarchies exclude through breadth (who may vote) while hybrids exclude through depth (how effectively votes translate into power). When legal or de facto barriers systematically exclude major population segments from political participation, the regime operates as electoral oligarchy regardless of institutional effectiveness for those permitted to participate.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Armenia from independence (09/21/1991) through the present exemplifies electoral hybrid regimes where multiparty elections occur regularly with opposition achieving significant representation, yet systematic manipulation ensures ruling party advantages while liberal legitimation remains critically weakened. Following independence, Armenia established multiparty electoral competition where opposition parties competed in presidential and parliamentary elections and gained legislative representation (opposition parties collectively holding 30-40% of parliament during various periods under Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan administrations). Real uncertainty in electoral outcomes required ruling parties to mobilize supporters and manage campaigns rather than relying on predetermined results, distinguishing Armenia from autocracies with hegemonic control. However, liberal legitimation remained critically weakened: executive power faced severely reduced constraints with presidents dominating weak parliaments and controlling judiciary appointments though formal institutional structures remained, civil liberties were systematically restricted through state media dominance (public television favoring incumbents, harassment of independent journalists) while some independent outlets operated, administrative obstacles to opposition (bureaucratic barriers, selective prosecution of opposition figures) occurred alongside permitted opposition organizing, and localized violence during campaigns (particularly in 2008 post-election crackdowns) demonstrated minimal rule of law protection. Electoral manipulation included biased electoral commission administration (voter list irregularities, ballot stuffing in some precincts), unequal resource access with ruling parties utilizing state resources for campaigns, and media bias creating uneven information environments. Despite these systematic advantages, opposition could compete meaningfully and occasionally posed threats (as in 2008 when opposition mobilized large protests and 2018 when Velvet Revolution occurred), requiring ruling parties to maintain manipulation rather than relying on hegemonic control. The persistence of hybrid characteristics even following the 2018 Velvet Revolution, despite improved civil liberties and reduced manipulation, reflects the difficulty of fully reviving liberal constraints and achieving free and fair elections meeting democratic standards.

Just-inside Cases: Georgia from the Rose Revolution (11/23/2003) represents an upper borderline between electoral democracy and electoral hybrid, with ongoing debate about whether liberal legitimation remained reduced but operative or became critically weakened under United National Movement government. Georgia featured competitive elections where UNM faced opposition from various parties, with opposition gaining parliamentary representation and winning municipal contests (including Tbilisi mayoralty in some periods). Media pluralism existed

with multiple television channels and print outlets representing diverse views, civil society operated with relative freedom, and some institutional checks functioned including Constitutional Court rulings against government and parliamentary debates limiting executive actions to some degree. These factors suggest reduced but operative liberal legitimation characteristic of electoral democracy. However, increasing executive dominance (Saakashvili concentrating power through institutional changes, weak parliamentary oversight in practice), selective prosecution of opposition figures and oligarchs supporting opposition (most notably Bidzina Ivanishvili before his 2012 electoral challenge), and instances of administrative pressure on opposition created systematic disadvantages suggesting critically weakened rather than merely reduced liberal legitimation. The 2012 peaceful alternation when opposition Georgian Dream coalition won parliamentary elections and UNM transferred power argues for electoral democracy classification (liberal legitimation sufficient to enable alternation through electoral means), yet the systematic advantages UNM enjoyed while in power and restrictions on opposition position Georgia near the borderline where distinguishing operative from critically weakened liberal legitimation requires careful assessment. The successful alternation suggests constraints retained enough effectiveness to constitute operative rather than critically weakened liberal legitimation, placing Georgia in electoral democracy category but at the borderline with electoral hybrid.

Just-outside Cases: Electoral democracies such as Poland under Law and Justice (PiS) government (2015-2023) feature genuinely free and fair elections meeting minimal competition standards and reduced but operative liberal legitimation despite significant governance deficits. Polish elections during this period involved genuine competition where Civic Platform and other opposition parties competed against PiS, with alternation occurring at local and European Parliament levels, opposition winning presidential elections narrowly in 2020 demonstrating genuine competition, and 2023 parliamentary elections producing opposition victory and government alternation. Electoral administration through independent National Electoral Commission maintained fairness despite political tensions, media pluralism persisted with significant private outlets providing opposition perspectives despite government pressure on public media, and opposition could organize freely through parties and civil society despite challenges. Governance deficits including judicial independence erosion (disciplinary chambers, Constitutional Tribunal manipulation), media freedom pressures (advertising taxation targeting critical outlets), and executive-legislative tensions created reduced liberal legitimation, yet courts still ruled against government in significant cases, opposition maintained strong institutional presence able to challenge government effectively, and constraints proved sufficient to enable

electoral alternation. The persistence of both electoral and liberal legitimation (though liberal component reduced) distinguishes electoral democracy from electoral hybrid where liberal legitimation becomes critically weakened to point of providing only minimal constraint.

Electoral autocracies such as Belarus under Alexander Lukashenko (1996-present) feature un-free and unfair elections where competition is so constrained that outcomes are predetermined, and liberal legitimation is absent rather than critically weakened. Opposition candidates face systematic exclusion through restrictive registration requirements (arbitrary candidate disqualifications), severe repression including imprisonment of opposition leaders and activists (mass arrests during 2020 protests), complete state control of media with no independent outlets permitted to operate domestically, electoral commission completely subordinated to executive producing implausible victory margins (Lukashenko typically claiming 70-80%+ of vote), and ballot manipulation ensuring predetermined results regardless of actual voting patterns. The absence of meaningful competition (opposition cannot realistically win even subnational contests), token opposition presence (allowed candidates serve as facade without genuine electoral threat), and predetermined outcomes (results known before counting) distinguish electoral autocracy from electoral hybrid where competition remains meaningful despite systematic disadvantages. Liberal legitimation is absent with no effective constraints on executive power (Lukashenko rules with unlimited authority, judiciary and legislature completely subordinated, no institutional checks function), civil liberties completely restricted (no independent media, no freedom of assembly, opposition organizing faces complete repression), and rule of law absent (laws applied arbitrarily serving regime control). Authority rests on institutional control, personal rule, and coercion rather than any electoral or liberal legitimation components.

6.1.4. Electoral Autocracy

Conceptualization: Electoral autocracy represents a distinctive configuration within the autocratic family where authority is organized around electoral procedures that are maintained in form but systematically emptied of authorizing function. This creates a specific legitimation pattern: electoral institutions structure authority claims and elite coordination, yet the regime drifts toward institutional legitimation through the complete hollowing-out of electoral authorization and the active suppression of liberal legitimation principles. Elections remain regular and formally multiparty for both legislature and chief executive, and rulers derive their claim to govern from these procedures. In practice, however, the electoral architecture operates as a

closed system of incumbency affirmation rather than as a mechanism translating citizen preferences into leadership selection (Schedler 2006).

The distinctive feature of electoral autocracy lies in this tension between electoral form and institutional substance. Unlike regimes organized primarily through institutional legitimation patterns (where authority flows from organizational hierarchies, doctrinal frameworks, or external imposition), electoral autocracies continue to structure elite coordination, resource distribution, and succession claims through electoral cycles and party competition. Yet unlike regimes where electoral legitimation functions genuinely, outcomes are predetermined through systematic manipulation, and liberal legitimation is not merely weakened but absent: meaningful constraints on executive power do not operate, and civil and political liberties are curtailed to prevent opposition from mounting effective challenges. The result is an electoral façade behind which institutional control mechanisms (security apparatuses, administrative hierarchies, patronage networks) increasingly determine who holds power. This hybrid quality generates distinctive elite behavior: ruling elites coordinate manipulation across information control, legal-administrative exclusion, and selective coercion. Electoral cycles remain central rituals compelling rulers to stage campaigns, distribute patronage, and mobilize loyalty through state resources, yet these rituals produce no genuine authorization. Opposition elites are tolerated but contained, obtaining limited representation under conditions that prevent alternation. Elite cohesion on the ruling side rests on shared access to rents and positions dependent on electoral victories that are practically guaranteed. Opposition elites face systematic fragmentation through media marginalization, financial constraints, and legal harassment (Levitsky/Way 2010, Magaloni 2006).

Electoral autocracies are distinguished from electoral hybrid regimes through the completeness of electoral authorization's collapse and liberal legitimation's absence. Electoral hybrid regimes also hold multiparty elections, but electoral legitimation retains partial function: opposition has realistic chances of winning executive power through electoral means, and liberal legitimation, though critically weakened, has not been eliminated entirely. Courts occasionally rule against government on politically consequential matters, opposition can campaign with significant though unequal media access, and civil liberties protections, while compromised, allow meaningful political organization. Electoral autocracy begins once manipulation and repression render outcomes substantially predetermined, electoral authorization ceases to translate citizen preferences into leadership selection, and institutional checks fail to constrain executive power on salient political issues. The boundary lies where opposition loses any realistic path to executive power through elections and liberal constraints cease to function in practice.

Electoral autocracies are distinguished from electoral oligarchies through suffrage inclusiveness rather than electoral quality. Electoral oligarchies restrict the franchise to a narrow segment of adults through property requirements, literacy tests (particularly when literacy rates are low), racial exclusions, or other discriminatory barriers that confine voting rights to an elite minority. While these regimes may maintain relatively free competition among the enfranchised and even some constitutional constraints, the systematic exclusion of large population segments from electoral participation places them outside the broadly participatory autocratic category. The decisive threshold lies in inclusiveness: when formal or effective exclusions confine voting rights to below roughly half of adults, the regime is oligarchic rather than autocratic, regardless of how predetermined outcomes may be (Schedler 2002: pp. 36-50). Electoral autocracies require broad suffrage where the vast majority of adults possess formal voting rights, even though electoral manipulation and repression predetermine outcomes.

Electoral autocracies are distinguished from one-party autocracies through the source and structure of legitimation. One-party autocracies derive authority primarily from party-organizational hierarchies and doctrinal frameworks rather than from electoral procedures. Elections, if held, serve internal party coordination purposes or provide ritualistic affirmation of decisions already made through party mechanisms. The party monopolizes candidate nominations, legally excludes competitors, or subordinates electoral procedures to organizational discipline such that elections serve primarily internal elite circulation rather than structuring authority claims toward citizens. Electoral autocracies retain formally plural competition with multiple parties contesting and continue to route control through electoral institutions (parties, electoral commissions, constitutional procedures) rather than through monopolistic party hierarchies.

Electoral autocracies are distinguished from personalist autocracies through the continued functionality of electoral-institutional mechanisms in structuring elite coordination and succession. Where incumbents still organize authority primarily through electoral institutions and maintain the electoral cycle as the central mechanism of elite coordination and succession management, the regime remains electoral autocracy even under intense leader-centrism and personalist tendencies. Reclassification to personalist autocracy requires that electoral-institutional mechanisms are de facto neutralized in practice and succession becomes non-institutionalized, such that elite cohesion depends fundamentally on personal loyalty networks and individual discretion rather than on electoral coordination and party-based resource distribution. The boundary lies where electoral institutions cease to structure how elites coordinate, distribute resources, and manage succession, replaced by personal networks and leader discretion.

Operationalization: A regime is classified as electoral autocracy when it meets thresholds across three core dimensions simultaneously. All three conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient. Failure of the first condition moves the case outside the electoral family entirely; failure of either the second or third condition moves it upward to electoral hybrid regime where either liberal constraints retain some bite or electoral authorization retains some function.

Electoral institutions are maintained: The regime holds institutionalized multiparty elections for the national legislature and the chief executive regularly, with legal opposition parties permitted to exist and contest. The electoral calendar functions as the organizing rhythm of political competition, even though outcomes are predetermined. Electoral institutions continue to structure elite coordination, authority claims, and resource distribution through party organizations, electoral commissions, and constitutional procedures. Brief postponements or rescheduling of elections do not alter classification; such tactical delays may serve electoral autocracy's manipulation strategy without fundamentally changing the institutional architecture. Indefinite suspension of elections, abolition of opposition parties, or transformation of elections into single-party nomination procedures indicates transition to non-electoral or one-party autocracy. The key indicator is whether electoral institutions continue to structure how ruling elites coordinate, distribute patronage, and justify authority, not whether elections function democratically or produce uncertainty. We assess this dimension through direct examination of constitutional provisions, electoral laws, party registration requirements, and the actual conduct of electoral cycles, drawing on electoral observation reports, legal scholarship, and institutional analyses. Opposition parties must be permitted legal existence and ballot access; regimes that criminalize all opposition or restrict competition to regime-created parties approach the one-party boundary.

Liberal legitimation is systematically absent: Courts and legislature do not constrain the executive on politically relevant issues, and civil liberties are restricted so severely that opposition cannot campaign freely, access media on equal terms, or mobilize supporters without facing repression. This goes beyond mere weakness of liberal institutions to their functional elimination in practice. Judicial rulings adverse to the executive are not enforced when they concern politically consequential matters, parliamentary oversight mechanisms exist in form only without effective investigative or sanctioning powers, and constitutional provisions limiting executive power operate as dead letters on issues affecting regime survival. Evidence includes systematic disqualification of viable opposition candidates through administrative procedures, criminalization of opposition political activities, total or near-total state control of broadcast media with independent outlets restricted to marginal online presence, systematic denial of

assembly permits or violent dispersal of opposition gatherings, and sustained harassment of independent civil society organizations through regulatory pressure or security service intimidation. The regime actively suppresses rather than merely neglects liberal legitimization principles. Isolated judicial rulings favoring opposition on minor matters or token parliamentary debates do not indicate operative liberal constraints; the test is whether institutional checks meaningfully limit executive action on politically salient issues. We assess this dimension through direct observation of executive-judicial-legislative interactions, media landscape analysis, and civil liberties protection in practice, cross-validating with Freedom House ratings (electoral autocracies typically score „Not Free“ with ratings of 5.5-7.0) and V-Dem indicators on judicial constraints, legislative independence, and civil society space where available. For many cases, particularly historical regimes and small states, such quantitative indicators do not exist, necessitating qualitative assessment of institutional functioning and repression patterns (Schedler 2006).

Electoral authorization has collapsed: Manipulation and coercion render outcomes substantially predetermined. Opposition parties may hold token seats in the legislature, but executive alternation through elections is not a realistic prospect. The electoral process no longer translates citizen preferences into leadership selection; instead, it ratifies decisions made through institutional control mechanisms prior to voting. Indicators include implausible incumbent vote margins inconsistent with observable public sentiment, systematic exclusion or disqualification of candidates who pose genuine threats to ruling party dominance, electoral commissions staffed entirely by regime loyalists who openly manipulate procedures without pretense of neutrality, major systematic discrepancies between independent observer assessments and official results, and recurrent violence or intimidation during campaign periods that goes unpunished by authorities. The test is whether opposition victory through electoral means remains within the realm of realistic possibility; if not, authorization has failed. We assess this dimension through analysis of electoral results patterns, observation reports from domestic and international monitors, documentation of manipulation techniques, and comparative assessment of official versus independent vote counts.

A regime must meet thresholds across all three dimensions simultaneously to qualify as electoral autocracy. The hybrid-autocracy boundary is crossed once opposition no longer has a realistic path to executive power through elections and liberal constraints cease to function on salient issues. The oligarchy-autocracy threshold is defined by suffrage inclusiveness: when legal or de facto barriers restrict the effective electorate to below roughly half of adults, classify as electoral oligarchy regardless of how predetermined outcomes are; broad suffrage with

predetermined outcomes indicates electoral autocracy. The one-party boundary is reached when the ruling party monopolizes candidate nominations, legally excludes competitors, or subordinates electoral procedures to party-organizational hierarchy such that elections serve primarily internal coordination rather than structuring authority claims toward citizens.

Quantitative indicators from established datasets corroborate qualitative assessment but do not determine classification. Electoral autocracies typically show V-Dem Clean Elections Index scores below 0.30, Freedom House ratings of „Not Free,“ and Polity executive constraints scores of 1 to 2. Classification rests fundamentally on qualitative assessment of legitimation patterns and institutional functioning in practice.

Personalist-leaning electoral autocracies show pronounced leader dominance and concentration of decision-making authority but continue to rely on electoral and party mechanisms for tenure security and elite coordination. Code as personalist autocracy only if effective checks from electoral-party institutions are absent in practice and succession is non-institutionalized, meaning that transitions depend on personal designation or power struggles rather than on electoral-constitutional procedures.

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases: Mexico under the PRI from 1940 to 1988 exemplifies electoral autocracy through comprehensive realization of all three dimensions. Multiparty elections for presidency and legislature anchored all authority claims and structured the political calendar, yet opposition victories were systematically blocked through administrative control of vote counting, monopoly over broadcast media, and massive patronage distribution. Courts and parliament never constrained the president on politically consequential matters, liberal legitimation was completely absent, and alternation remained implausible throughout the period despite formal competitive procedures. The regime maintained elaborate electoral rituals while predetermining outcomes through institutional control mechanisms. The combination of these features across all three dimensions over nearly five decades places Mexico squarely within electoral autocracy classification (Magaloni 2006).

Belarus since 1996 demonstrates sustained electoral autocracy following the concentration of presidential power. Regular presidential and parliamentary elections occur with legal opposition parties permitted to contest, yet systematic repression, candidate exclusion through administrative disqualification, and total control of media and electoral commissions predetermine all outcomes. Judicial and legislative institutions provide no effective limits on executive authority. Opposition candidates are routinely imprisoned or barred from running, independent media outlets are shuttered, and official vote counts systematically diverge from independent

assessments. Electoral institutions remain while authorization and liberal constraint have been eliminated entirely (Way 2015a: 691-706).

Just-inside Cases: Singapore from the 1990s onward illustrates a just-in case where constitutional defense measures and organizational dominance create ambiguity distinguishing electoral autocracy from one-party autocracy. Elections remain competitive in form with opposition parties contesting and occasionally winning constituencies, satisfying the electoral institutions criterion. Electoral outcomes consistently favor the ruling PAP through manipulation of electoral rules, media control, and legal restrictions on opposition activity. However, the PAP's organizational monopoly, comprehensive control over state institutions, and systematic subordination of plural competition to party-organizational discipline blur the boundary between manipulated electoral pluralism and institutional-organizational dominance. The ambiguity centers on whether electoral procedures or party-organizational hierarchy primarily structures authority. The classification as borderline electoral/one-party autocracy rather than full electoral autocracy rests on: (1) the PAP's institutional monopoly extends beyond electoral manipulation to organizational control over state apparatus, (2) opposition parties obtain limited representation but face systematic administrative and legal constraints that suggest subordination to party-organizational logic rather than merely manipulated pluralism, (3) electoral mechanisms coexist with party-organizational hierarchy in structuring authority rather than electoral procedures alone organizing elite coordination. Transition to unambiguous electoral autocracy would require either genuine electoral pluralism without organizational monopoly or clear shift where party organization no longer structures authority independently of electoral procedures (Chua 2004, Bell 1997: 6-32).

Russia from the 2008 office-swap between Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev on constitutes a borderline case toward personalist autocracy. Multiparty executive and legislative elections continued regularly and structured authority claims, satisfying the electoral institutions criterion. Competition was rendered non-genuine through comprehensive media control, systematic candidate exclusion, and administrative manipulation of electoral procedures, with liberal legitimation absent in practice. However, elite cohesion increasingly centered on the leader and security networks rather than on party-based coordination, yet succession remained managed through electoral-constitutional channels rather than through personal fiat or designation. The regime stands at the boundary: rising personalism and coercive coordination point toward personalist rule, while the organizing logic still operates through electoral institutions. The classification as borderline electoral/personalist autocracy rested on: (1) electoral procedures continued to structure authority claims and elite coordination despite personalist tendencies, (2)

succession mechanisms remained institutionalized through electoral-constitutional procedures rather than personal designation, (3) United Russia party maintained organizational role in elite coordination alongside security networks. Classification would shift to personalist autocracy if succession became non-institutionalized and electoral mechanisms ceased to structure elite coordination in practice, replaced entirely by personal networks and leader discretion (Gel'man 2015).

Azerbaijan under the Aliyev dynasty (particularly after 2003) borders personalist autocracy from the opposite direction. Electoral procedures are maintained with multiparty competition satisfying the electoral institutions criterion, yet dynastic succession (from Heydar to Ilham Aliyev in 2003) and extreme concentration of power in the presidency suggest drift toward personalist rule. However, elections continue to structure elite coordination and resource distribution through the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party rather than purely through personal networks, keeping the regime within electoral autocracy despite strong personalist tendencies. The boundary distinction rests on whether electoral-party mechanisms or personal loyalty networks primarily organize elite coordination.

Just-outside Cases: Electoral hybrid regimes such as Malaysia before 2018 retained genuine though unequal competition allowing realistic opposition victory, distinguishing them from electoral autocracy. Elections still authorized despite significant manipulation, liberal constraints operated partially with courts occasionally ruling against government, and alternation remained possible through electoral means. Opposition could campaign with unequal but significant media access, civil society maintained space for organization despite government pressure, and judicial independence, though compromised, retained some function. The 2018 opposition victory confirmed that electoral authorization functioned sufficiently to translate citizen preferences into leadership selection. This demonstrates the critical threshold: where opposition retains a realistic path to power through elections, electoral authorization retains function, and liberal constraints retain some bite, the regime remains hybrid rather than crossing into electoral autocracy.

Personalist autocracies such as Uganda under Yoweri Museveni (particularly from the mid-2000s onward) illustrate the boundary with electoral autocracy through progressive neutralization of electoral-institutional mechanisms. Multiparty elections were reintroduced in 2005 after a no-party system, formally satisfying electoral procedures. However, electoral institutions became increasingly subordinated to personal rule: succession planning centers on Museveni's personal designation rather than party-institutional processes, authority flows primarily from personal control over military and security forces rather than through party-electoral

coordination, and elite cohesion depends fundamentally on personal loyalty networks and patronage distribution through presidential discretion rather than on electoral victories or institutionalized party structures. The contrast shows that electoral autocracy requires electoral institutions to genuinely structure elite coordination and authority claims, even if outcomes are predetermined. Where personal networks and leader discretion progressively replace electoral-institutional coordination as the primary organizing mechanism of authority, the regime crosses into personalist autocracy.

One-party autocracies such as Uzbekistan after 1991 demonstrate the boundary with electoral autocracy through the subordination of formally plural competition to party-organizational dominance. Multiple political parties exist legally and contest elections, formally satisfying multiparty criteria. However, opposition parties were created by the regime itself or co-opted entirely, with candidate selection controlled through the ruling party's organizational hierarchy. Authority flows from party-organizational structures rather than from genuinely plural electoral procedures. Elections serve primarily to ratify decisions made within party structures and to provide international legitimation rather than structuring authority through competitive electoral pluralism. Elite circulation occurs through party-organizational mechanisms rather than through electoral competition. The fundamental difference lies in the legitimation pattern: where party-organizational hierarchy subordinates nominally plural electoral procedures to internal coordination mechanisms and opposition parties lack genuine autonomy from the ruling party's organizational control, the regime is one-party autocracy rather than electoral autocracy despite the formal existence of multiple parties.

6.1.5. Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy

Conceptualization: Electoral oligarchical autocracy constitutes a distinct legitimation pattern defined by the systematic restriction of political participation to a legally defined minority combined with the absence of meaningful liberal-constitutional constraints on executive power within that elite. Its legitimizing narrative centers on the necessity of elite stewardship for maintaining order and competent governance, explicitly rejecting the principle of popular sovereignty. This narrative need not be articulated as explicit programmatic ideology; it is reconstructed from institutionalized arrangements, elite discourse patterns, and the functional logic embedded in suffrage restrictions and governance practices. This pattern adopts the institutional façade of electoral competition while ensuring these processes lack substantive fairness and capacity to constrain the ruling group.

Authority is structured through the legal exclusion of substantial population segments from suffrage combined with the systematic failure of intra-elite constitutionalism across three dimensions: electoral competition is rendered meaningless through fraud and manipulation, executive power operates without effective legislative or judicial constraint, and civil liberties are restricted even for the enfranchised elite. Formal representative institutions (parliaments, courts, parties) exist but function as instruments of elite domination rather than as mechanisms of genuine contestation or constraint (Schedler 2013). The legitimation pattern fundamentally shapes elite composition and cohesion. The ruling coalition comprises a narrow segment defined by socioeconomic status or political allegiance, creating an elite united by shared interest in preserving both the exclusionary system and their dominant position.

This distinguishes electoral oligarchical autocracy from electoral oligarchy, where elite factions compete under meaningful constitutional constraints, and from right-wing autocracy, which implements comprehensive exclusion based on racial or ideological supremacy while typically abandoning multi-party elections altogether in favor of alternative legitimation patterns like corporatism or party monopoly (Gibson 2012). The boundary with electoral oligarchy is decisively crossed when intra-elite constitutionalism collapses, eliminating meaningful competition and constraints within the privileged minority. The boundary with electoral autocracy is defined by suffrage inclusiveness and the addressee of legitimation claims: electoral autocracies maintain universal suffrage (above approximately 50% of adults) and symbolically address legitimation to the entire population while systematically manipulating electoral outcomes; electoral oligarchical autocracies restrict suffrage to a minority elite (below approximately 40-50% of adults) and organize legitimation primarily within that elite stratum, making no pretense of popular sovereignty.

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as electoral oligarchical autocracy when it simultaneously satisfies two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions:

Criterion 1: Systematic suffrage restrictions to a minority elite. The regime must maintain de jure or de facto suffrage restrictions that reduce the effectively enfranchised population to below approximately 40-50% of the adult population. This threshold reflects the conceptual definition of elite minority rule. Restrictions must be institutionalized through legal mechanisms such as gender restrictions (typically excluding all women), property qualifications, literacy tests in contexts of widespread illiteracy, elevated age thresholds (voting age 21-30 rather than 18), racial or ethnic exclusions, or complex registration requirements designed to disenfranchise specific socioeconomic groups. Historical regimes frequently employed compounded exclusions: male-suffrage-only regimes without additional restrictions represent the upper boundary

of this pattern at approximately 40-45% of adults aged 18+ (or approximately 50% at the regime's typically higher voting age threshold), while cumulative restrictions (gender combined with property, literacy, or racial exclusions) typically reduce enfranchisement to 20-30% or substantially below.

This criterion focuses on institutionalized, legally or administratively entrenched exclusions rather than mere de facto suppression of voting through intimidation or violence within formally inclusive suffrage frameworks. Such suppression through intimidation, clientelistic control, or massive fraud within formally broad suffrage constitutes electoral manipulation under Criterion 2 rather than structural suffrage restriction under Criterion 1. The restrictions must be the primary cause of the narrow electoral base rather than incidental formal barriers that lack exclusionary effect in practice.

Critically, suffrage restrictions must have substantial empirical impact. A nominal property requirement in a context of widespread property ownership, or a literacy test in a highly literate society, would not alone satisfy this criterion if the effective electorate still exceeds the 40-50% threshold. Assessment requires examination of suffrage legislation, census data on property ownership or literacy rates, electoral participation data relative to adult population, and historical scholarship documenting the intended and actual exclusionary impact of voting restrictions.

Criterion 2: Absence of meaningful intra-elite constitutionalism. Among the enfranchised minority, the regime must fail to maintain a genuine liberal-constitutional order. This condition reflects the collapse of credible, enforceable constraints within the elite, the absence of expectational reliability regarding institutional limits on power. It is operationalized through the failure of at least two of the following three sub-conditions, which collectively define the breakdown of intra-elite constraint:

Electoral Competition: Elections lack substantive fairness and competition within the enfranchised elite. The functional test is whether opposition within the elite possesses a realistic path to executive power through electoral means. Indicators of failure include systematic electoral fraud rendering outcomes predetermined, repression of elite opposition factions, absence of alternation in power over extended periods despite formal multiparty competition, and manipulation of electoral procedures by incumbent-controlled commissions. The decisive question is whether electoral outcomes reflect genuine contestation among enfranchised factions or are determined through extra-electoral mechanisms of incumbent control.

Executive Constraints: The executive operates without effective constraint from legislative or judicial institutions. The functional test is whether parliament and courts can block, modify, or reverse executive decisions on politically consequential matters. Indicators of failure include

legislatures functioning as rubber-stamp bodies that ratify executive preferences without substantive deliberation, judiciaries lacking independence to rule against executive interests, executive capacity to govern by decree circumventing parliamentary procedures, and appointment powers concentrated in the executive without meaningful confirmation processes. The decisive question is whether institutional checks operate in practice to limit executive discretion on salient political issues.

Civil Liberties: Core civil liberties including freedom of expression, assembly, and association are significantly restricted for the enfranchised population. The functional test is whether elite members can organize politically, publish dissenting views, and mobilize supporters without facing state repression. Indicators of failure include press censorship targeting elite-owned newspapers, arbitrary detention of politically active elite members, forced exile of opposition figures, prohibition or harassment of elite political associations, and surveillance and intimidation of dissenting voices within the privileged stratum. The decisive question is whether civil liberties protections enable genuine political contestation among the enfranchised or whether repression extends even to the privileged minority.

A regime must meet both primary conditions simultaneously. Failure of the first condition (broad suffrage above approximately 50% with autocratic features) results in classification as electoral autocracy. Failure of the second condition (restricted suffrage below approximately 40-50% with elite constitutionalism) results in classification as electoral oligarchy.

Quantitative indicators from V-Dem and Polity serve as supportive diagnostic tools but never as decisive classification criteria (Coppedge et al. 2020). They should be consulted only when qualitative-historical evidence regarding suffrage restrictions and intra-elite constitutionalism is consistent with index values. In cases of divergence between qualitative assessment and quantitative scores, qualitative evidence takes precedence. Index values assist in boundary cases by providing comparative context but cannot override functional analysis of legitimation patterns and institutional practices.

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases:

Brazil's Old Republic (1889-1930) represents a paradigmatic case. The regime maintained suffrage restricted through literacy requirements in a context where illiteracy exceeded 65% of the adult population, limiting the effective electorate to approximately 2-3% and satisfying Criterion 1 through restrictions with substantial exclusionary impact well below the 40-50% threshold. It failed Criterion 2 through the systematic absence of intra-elite constitutionalism: the „politics of the governors“ (política dos governadores) constituted an autocratic cartel with

predetermined outcomes through coronelismo (a system of electoral fraud and violence controlled by local bosses), the executive dominated a rubber-stamp federal legislature and subordinate judiciary, and civil liberties for the enfranchised were routinely violated through arbitrary detention and press censorship against dissenting elite voices, demonstrating failure on all three sub-conditions (Leal 1977).

Honduras (1900-1950) provides a second paradigm. Suffrage was restricted by property and literacy qualifications in a context of widespread poverty and illiteracy, maintaining an effective electorate below 10% of the adult population and satisfying Criterion 1 through restrictions with substantial exclusionary impact. The liberal and conservative parties operated within a system of entrenched elite pacts where electoral outcomes were negotiated among faction leaders rather than determined by free voting. Under figures like Policarpo Bonilla and subsequent caudillos, the executive routinely ignored congressional opposition, dismissed unfavorable judicial rulings, and controlled appointments to both branches. Dissenting voices within the elite faced intimidation through arbitrary arrest and forced exile, while opposition newspapers were shut down or censored. This confirms the systematic failure of intra-elite constitutionalism across all three dimensions (Mahoney 2001).

Just-Inside Cases: Chile (1891-1920) during the Parliamentary Republic presents a just-inside case testing the intra-elite constitutionalism criterion. The regime maintained suffrage restricted through literacy requirements that excluded approximately 60% of the adult population, satisfying Criterion 1. However, Criterion 2 is ambiguous: the parliamentary system featured genuine rotation among elite factions and some judicial independence, but electoral fraud through bribery and caciquismo remained systematic, and the executive (despite parliamentary constraints) could manipulate outcomes through interior ministry control of elections. The case approaches but does not clearly cross the threshold, as at least one sub-condition (executive constraints through parliamentary mechanisms) was arguably satisfied. Classification depends on whether systematic electoral manipulation is weighted more heavily than functional parliamentary constraints. Code as just-inside electoral oligarchical autocracy with annotation explaining the ambiguity (Collier/Sater 2004).

Just-Outside Cases: Personalist autocracies such as Dominican Republic under Trujillo (1930-1961) differ through the complete subordination of all institutions to personal rule. While the Trujillo regime maintained formally restricted suffrage and hollow electoral procedures, authority derived entirely from personal loyalty networks and coercive control rather than from any institutionalized elite arrangement. Electoral oligarchical autocracies feature elite cartels with collective interests in maintaining exclusionary systems; personalist autocracies feature

atomized elites dependent on the ruler's personal favor. The distinction matters for succession dynamics: electoral oligarchical autocracies can manage elite turnover through institutionalized mechanisms, while personalist autocracies face succession crises upon the ruler's death or incapacitation (Hartlyn 1998).

6.2 Regimes Based on Provisional Legitimation

Regimes Based on Provisional Legitimation claim authority through temporal self-limitation and future orientation rather than through established authorization procedures or permanent institutional frameworks. These regimes explicitly designate themselves as temporary, pending alternative forms of legitimation, typically electoral authorization. Authority derives from managing transitions between regime types rather than from stable institutional patterns.

The legitimation logic centers on future orientation: regimes claim current authority is justified by commitments to establish alternative legitimation frameworks. This temporal framing structures elite behavior, as anticipated future authorization provides incentives for cooperation during transition. However, when provisional status becomes indefinite without progress toward promised authorization, legitimation claims weaken and often reveal underlying autocratic consolidation.

Provisional Legitimation encompasses two variants differentiated by whether liberal legitimation operates during transition. Democratizing regimes maintain robust civil liberties, genuine executive constraints through multiparty power-sharing, and inclusive procedures, creating structural conditions that make electoral commitments credible. Non-Electoral Transitional regimes lack these liberal features, operating through crisis-necessity claims (emergency conditions, revolutionary consolidation, post-conflict stabilization) that justify unconstrained executive authority. Both variants typically reference electoral legitimation as intended endpoint, but differ fundamentally in whether authority derives from liberal-procedural correctness (inclusive processes, rights protection, executive constraints) or from substantive necessity claims (crisis management, revolutionary credentials, technocratic expertise).

This distinction between democratizing and non-electoral transitional regimes has both definitional and predictive significance. Liberal features during transition create structural conditions making electoral commitments more credible: opposition can organize effectively, executive power faces institutional constraints, and pluralism enables monitoring. Electoral promises without liberal features face weaker enforcement mechanisms, as opposition lacks

organizational capacity and accountability depends on regime self-restraint rather than institutional checks.

Boundary setting distinguishes Provisional Legitimation from adjacent patterns. These regimes differ from Electoral Autocracies undergoing liberalization because incumbents lack electoral mandates; authority is explicitly provisional rather than based on electoral victories. They differ from Military Autocracies claiming transitional status when unified military command monopolizes authority from inception; genuine Provisional Legitimation requires institutional fluidity, not consolidated hierarchy using transitional rhetoric as cover. They differ from personalist or one-party regimes claiming endless transitions when institutional consolidation has occurred; provisional status requires genuine uncertainty about future authorization, not merely rhetorical claims masking permanent rule.

Elite composition reflects transitional imperatives. In democratizing variants, recruitment occurs through multiparty negotiation and inclusive processes, with elites from diverse political constituencies represented. In non-electoral transitional variants, recruitment reflects crisis management needs (militia control, bureaucratic survival, revolutionary credentials). Networks in democratizing regimes form around horizontal power-sharing commitments; in non-electoral transitional regimes around vertical patron-client ties and coercion. These differences shape post-transition trajectories: inclusive elite networks facilitate democratic consolidation possibilities, while exclusive crisis-based networks create pressures toward autocratic consolidation. Provisional Legitimation is inherently temporally unstable. Most regimes transition to electoral legitimation, consolidate into permanent autocracy, or experience breakdown. Extended duration without resolution typically reveals either successful resistance to consolidation (state failure preventing stabilization) or fake provisional claims (autocracy consolidated under personalist, military, or party control while maintaining transitional rhetoric as legitimation facade). Genuine provisional legitimation creates pressures toward resolution, while indefinite transitional status indicates underlying permanent patterns.

6.2.1. Democratizing Regime

Conceptualization: Democratizing regimes legitimate authority through provisional-procedural claims: the assertion that inclusive processes, pluralistic structures, and binding commitments to democratic transition confer legitimacy during periods when electoral authorization is deferred. Authority derives neither from electoral victories, revolutionary mandates, technocratic necessity, nor imposed settlements, but from procedural architecture itself: governance

structures resulting from multiparty consensus, operating through power-sharing mechanisms preventing single-faction monopoly, and maintaining openness to contestation through protected opposition rights. The regime's explicitly temporary character is itself a legitimation source: by institutionalizing provisional status through binding electoral timelines or constitutional roadmaps, regimes claim authority precisely through self-limitation.

This legitimation pattern shapes elite structures distinctively. Elites are recruited across ideological and organizational boundaries through negotiated inclusion rather than electoral competition, revolutionary vanguards, or technocratic appointment, reflecting political constituencies requiring representation to validate the transitional process. Cohesion derives from procedural pacts (O'Donnell/Schmitter 1986: 37-47): shared commitment to the transition process temporarily suspends winner-take-all competition, creating incentives for cross-factional cooperation. Networks form horizontally through transitional institutions (coalition cabinets, roundtable forums) rather than vertically through party discipline or military command. This creates distinctive fragility: elite cohesion depends on continuous demonstration of progress toward democratic transition and unravels if timelines are breached or dominant factions defect from procedural commitments.

Democratizing regimes are distinguished from autocracies deploying transitional rhetoric by credible procedural architecture. Autocratic regimes frequently claim provisional status to justify emergency powers or indefinite rule but lack institutional mechanisms (binding timelines, multiparty governance, opposition rights) characterizing genuine provisional-procedural legitimation. Military regimes may promise elections while monopolizing authority; personalist rulers may convene multiparty forums lacking decision-making power; revolutionary governments may claim transitional mandates while systematically excluding opposition. The distinguishing feature is whether procedural inclusiveness and temporal self-limitation are institutionalized through binding commitments and distributed authority, or merely rhetorical covers for unilateral rule.

Critical for classification is distinguishing negotiation phases from transitional government formation. During negotiation phases, incumbent autocratic regimes may bargain with opposition while retaining unilateral executive authority and capacity to reverse the process through normal governmental decisions. These periods are coded according to incumbent regime's legitimation pattern, with notation of ongoing negotiations. Classification as democratizing begins only when shared executive authority is institutionalized such that reversal would require violation of established frameworks, coercion against multiparty partners, or regime breakdown

rather than routine policy reversal. This shift from unilateral reversal capacity to institutionalized multiparty governance marks the beginning of provisional-procedural legitimation.

Despite liberal features (inclusiveness, pluralism, civil liberties), democratizing regimes are classified as Hybrid rather than Democracy because they lack electoral authorization. Democracy definitionally requires authority derived from competitive elections; provisional regimes, regardless of quality or liberal character, cannot be democracies until elections conferring governmental authority are held. The transition from Hybrid to Democracy occurs when elections are successfully conducted, assuming other democratic criteria (fairness, competitiveness, civil liberties) are maintained.

Operationalization: Following Va-PoReg's de facto classification principle, a regime is coded as Democratizing when actual institutional structures meet all of the following criteria simultaneously.

Electoral authorization must be absent. No executive or legislative elections conferring governmental authority have been held. If competitive elections have occurred, classify as democracy or electoral regime type regardless of transitional claims. This criterion is binary: either elections have been held (not democratizing) or they have not (potentially democratizing pending other criteria).

A multiparty transitional government must be established. An interim executive authority exercises de facto governmental power, issuing decrees and controlling ministries. The government must exhibit multiparty character through either representatives from at least two distinct political factions holding positions with substantive decision-making authority (cabinet posts with genuine policy influence, not merely advisory roles), or if the executive remains single-faction, at least two additional opposition parties can organize freely, contest scheduled elections, and operate media without systematic repression. The government must explicitly claim provisional status through self-designation as „interim,“ „transitional,“ or equivalent terminology, and must be formed after regime rupture (revolution, authoritarian collapse, negotiated settlement) rather than through normal democratic succession. Critically, reversal of the transition process must require violation of established institutional frameworks or coercion against multiparty partners rather than routine executive decisions, distinguishing transitional governments from mere negotiation phases where incumbents retain unilateral reversal capacity.

Binding electoral commitment must be demonstrated within 12 weeks of transitional government formation. The regime demonstrates commitment to democratic elections through announced election date with timeline not exceeding 24 months, binding transitional constitution specifying electoral timeline with enforcement mechanisms, or formal invitation to

international electoral monitoring with agreed timeline. Election postponements do not disqualify if new date is set within six months with technical justification (voter registration, security stabilization), but repeated postponements (more than two) or indefinite delay without credible justification result in reclassification. This criterion is non-negotiable: absence of electoral commitment within 12 weeks disqualifies democratizing classification regardless of other features, as electoral commitment distinguishes provisional-procedural legitimation from crisis-necessity legitimation.

A civil liberties floor must be maintained. The regime must satisfy at least two of three sub-criteria: opposition organizing rights (at least two opposition parties can engage in peaceful political activity without systematic detention or blanket prohibition), media pluralism (at least one independent media outlet operates without pre-publication censorship), and proportionate repression (repression limited to responses to armed resistance rather than targeting peaceful organization or media criticism). Satisfaction of fewer than two criteria results in non-electoral transitional classification rather than democratizing.

No single faction may hold monopoly power. No single political faction holds unconstrained veto power over transitional decisions. Government operates through coalition requiring consensus, transitional council with distributed authority, or parliamentary accountability with multiparty composition. Regimes where one faction dominates all key decisions despite nominal inclusion of other parties fail this criterion.

Alternative legitimation patterns must be excluded. The regime cannot be dominated by a military junta exercising effective veto power over civilian decisions (military autocracy), a single ruling party monopolizing transitional institutions while banning opposition (one-party autocracy), or personalist authority exercising unilateral control (personalist autocracy). If armed forces hold veto power or a single party or leader monopolizes decision-making despite nominal multiparty structures, classify according to underlying autocratic pattern.

Temporal considerations for mid-year formations apply. All assessments use July 1st as the temporal anchor. If transitional government forms after July 1st of year N, code as democratizing beginning July 1st of year N+1, provided all criteria remain satisfied at that date. Changes in government composition (prime minister replacement, party withdrawals, coalition reshuffles) do not reset the 12-week electoral commitment timeline unless a fundamental shift in legitimation pattern occurs (military coup against transitional government, transition from unilateral to multiparty executive). Regimes persisting beyond 24 months without holding elections should be reassessed for whether they remain genuinely provisional or have consolidated into underlying autocratic patterns; indefinite maintenance of transitional status without electoral

progress typically indicates crisis-necessity legitimation rather than provisional-procedural legitimation.

Borderline cases guidance assists with ambiguous situations. If electoral commitment is slightly delayed (13-16 weeks) but other criteria strongly satisfied and commitment appears credible, we code as a democratizing regime with annotation. If power imbalance exists despite formal multiparty structure, apply substantive authority we test: Can weaker parties veto key decisions or exit with consequences for regime stability? If yes, code as democratizing; if no, code as non-electoral transitional. If multiple criteria are borderline simultaneously, presume non-electoral transitional unless clear trajectory of improvement is evident.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Germany (11/10/1918-01/19/1919) exemplifies democratizing regime characteristics through the Council of People's Deputies' multiparty composition (SPD and USPD at executive level, DDP in key ministries), rapid electoral commitment (elections announced 11/30/1918, 20 days after formation, held 01/19/1919), and civil liberties permitting opposition organizing and media pluralism. Despite repression of the armed Spartacist uprising, proportionate repression criterion was satisfied because violence targeted armed insurrection rather than peaceful opposition, and other leftist parties operated legally. Legitimation derived from procedural inclusiveness and electoral commitment rather than revolutionary mandate (Kolb 2005: 23-36).

South Africa (09/01/1993-04/27/1994) represents paradigmatic negotiated transition through the Transitional Executive Council including ANC, National Party, Inkatha Freedom Party, and other formations in power-sharing arrangements. Authority derived from inclusive negotiation and binding electoral commitment in the Interim Constitution scheduling 04/27/1994 elections with constitutional enforcement mechanisms. Civil liberties and media freedom enabled opposition across the spectrum to organize and campaign. The TEC period marked the shift from negotiation phase (where NP retained unilateral reversal capacity) to institutionalized multiparty governance requiring regime breakdown rather than routine policy change for reversal (Sisk 1995: 210-235).

Nepal (04/24/2006-04/10/2008) following the Jana Andolan II movement exemplifies post-monarchy democratizing transition. The interim government included Seven Party Alliance and Maoists in power-sharing arrangements after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (November 2006). All three civil liberties sub-criteria satisfied: opposition organizing across full spectrum including former insurgents, media pluralism with independent outlets operating freely, and proportionate repression with violence limited to isolated security incidents rather than

systematic political targeting. Binding electoral commitment established through peace agreement specifying Constituent Assembly elections (held 04/10/2008). The shift from King Gyanendra's autocratic rule to multiparty interim government required regime rupture rather than policy adjustment, with reversal necessitating breakdown of peace agreement and renewed armed conflict (Lawoti/Pahari 2010: 1-19).

Just-inside Cases: Portugal (04/25/1974-11/25/1975) illustrates complexity during military-influenced transitions. MFA takeover established provisional government with civilian party participation, announced elections (Constituent Assembly held 04/25/1975), and maintained formal democratic commitment. However, Council of the Revolution exercised substantial veto power and systematic purges of rightist forces occurred, straining the exclusion of alternative patterns criterion. Coded as borderline democratizing rather than military autocracy because civilian parties held genuine governmental authority contestable through political mobilization, elections were held with results respected despite MFA preferences, and civil liberties were maintained for most spectrum (Maxwell 1995).

Spain (04/01/1977-06/15/1977) presents temporal complexity. Democratizing classification begins only 04/01/1977 with Communist Party legalization establishing genuine multiparty pluralism, not with Suárez's appointment (07/01/1976) when PCE remained illegal. The brief window before 06/15/1977 elections constitutes democratizing: multiparty government (though Suárez-dominated), full opposition legalization, expanded civil liberties, and binding electoral commitment (announced 10/01/1976). Only when all criteria converged did Spain transition from liberalizing autocracy to democratizing regime.

Just-outside Cases: Thailand (05/22/2014-03/24/2019) under NCPO is classified as military autocracy rather than democratizing despite transitional rhetoric and electoral promises. The National Council for Peace and Order exercised unconstrained authority through unified military command under General Prayuth Chan-ocha. Interim constitution (July 2014) granted NCPO absolute legislative and executive power with legal immunity. Civilian advisory bodies (National Legislative Assembly, National Reform Council) lacked substantive decision-making authority and were appointed by NCPO rather than emerging from multiparty negotiation. Civil liberties systematically violated: opposition organizing prohibited under martial law and Article 44 powers, media faced pre-publication censorship and post-publication prosecution, repression targeted peaceful political activity including academic seminars and symbolic gestures. Electoral promises repeatedly postponed (2015, 2016, 2017) with NCPO controlling timeline unilaterally. Test: could military as unified institution override civilian decisions? Yes,

demonstrably through constitutional prerogatives and direct command authority (Chambers/Waitoolkiat 2016: 387-406).

Iraq (06/28/2004-01/30/2005) under Iraqi Interim Government is classified as non-electoral transitional rather than democratizing due to insufficient liberal features despite formal multi-party structure. Government included diverse factions (Kurdish, Shia, Sunni representatives) but excluded Baathist elements systematically. Civil liberties floor not met: only one of three sub-criteria satisfied. Media pluralism existed with multiple outlets operating, but opposition organizing severely constrained by security collapse and sectarian violence, and repression extended beyond armed insurgents to peaceful political exclusion of former regime elements. Executive constraints nominal: substantial American military presence (138,000 troops) and external influence over security decisions meant reversal capacity depended on coalition forces rather than Iraqi multiparty consensus. While elections were announced and held (01/30/2005), absence of robust civil liberties during transitional period prevents democratizing classification (Dawisha 2009: 178-203).

Zimbabwe (02/13/2009-07/31/2013) Government of National Unity is classified as electoral autocracy (power-sharing variant) rather than democratizing because it emerged from flawed elections rather than post-rupture transition. ZANU-PF retained dominant control over security forces (military, police, intelligence) and state apparatus despite nominal power-sharing with MDC formations. Systematic repression continued throughout GNU period: opposition organizing faced harassment and violence, independent media operated under threat, and civil liberties floor not maintained. Power-sharing arrangement represented accommodation within ongoing electoral autocratic rule rather than genuine multiparty governance where reversal would require regime breakdown. MDC ministers could be removed or sidelined by ZANU-PF unilaterally, failing the test for genuine coalition governance. The arrangement emerged from electoral manipulation (2008 runoff boycott) rather than regime rupture, distinguishing it from post-revolutionary or post-collapse democratizing transitions (LeBas 2011: 133-156).

6.2.2. Non-Electoral Transitional Regime

Conceptualization: Non-electoral transitional regimes legitimate authority through crisis-necessity claims rather than liberal-procedural commitments. These regimes represent the autocratic variant of Provisional Legitimation and constitute a common pattern for post-rupture governance. They emerge from regime ruptures (revolutions, institutional collapse, civil war termination) where authority structures have dissolved but no new inclusive legitimation

framework has been established. Unlike democratizing regimes that claim authority through liberal processes pending elections, non-electoral transitional regimes assert the right to govern through substantive necessity: emergency conditions, revolutionary consolidation, post-conflict stabilization, or technocratic imperatives that preclude normal authorization procedures.

The legitimation logic centers on retrospective validation rather than procedural correctness. Regimes claim authority will be justified by outcomes (successful stabilization, revolutionary consolidation, crisis resolution) rather than through processes (multiparty governance, protected civil liberties, executive constraints). This distinguishes them fundamentally from democratizing regimes, where legitimacy derives from inclusive procedures and liberal features themselves during the transitional period, not from promised future outcomes.

The critical distinction from democratizing regimes lies in whether liberal legitimation operates during transition. Both regime types typically reference electoral legitimation as intended endpoint and often promise elections. The difference is not whether elections are promised, but whether liberal features create structural conditions making those promises credible and enforceable. Democratizing regimes maintain robust civil liberties, genuine executive constraints through multiparty power-sharing, and pluralism enabling monitoring. These liberal features serve as commitment devices: opposition has structural power to hold regimes accountable, executive authority is constrained through institutional checks, and renegeing carries high costs. Non-electoral transitional regimes lack these features. Opposition organizing is constrained, executive power operates unilaterally or through dominated coalitions, and civil liberties are limited. Electoral promises under such conditions constitute cheap talk: opposition lacks organizational capacity to enforce promises, regimes retain unilateral authority to cancel or manipulate elections, and no accountability mechanisms exist beyond regime self-restraint.

Elite composition reflects crisis imperatives rather than negotiated inclusion. Recruitment occurs through control of violence, bureaucratic survival, revolutionary credentials, or clan networks, not through representation of diverse political constituencies. Cohesion derives from shared crisis management or revolutionary solidarity rather than from procedural pacts. Networks form around vertical patron-client ties and coercion rather than horizontal power-sharing. When crises resolve, these regimes typically consolidate into permanent autocracy rather than transitioning to democracy, as liberal elite structures were never established.

Non-electoral transitional regimes encompass considerable heterogeneity, ranging from highly exclusive governance to partially liberalized autocracies with some opposition activity tolerated. Classification as non-electoral transitional rather than democratizing is determined by whether liberal features are sufficiently robust to constitute genuine liberal legitimation,

assessed without ex post consideration of outcomes. Regimes are coded based on features present at the time, not retrospectively adjusted based on whether democratization ultimately succeeded or failed.

Boundary setting distinguishes non-electoral transitional from other patterns. These regimes differ from democratizing regimes through absence of robust liberal features (fewer than two of three civil liberties criteria satisfied, or lack of genuine executive constraints). They differ from military autocracies because military-led regimes with unified command hierarchies code as military autocracy from inception, regardless of transitional rhetoric or electoral promises. When military officers exercise authority through chain of command or hold veto power over civilian actors, classification is military autocracy. Non-electoral transitional applies only when armed groups are fragmented without institutional hierarchy or when civilian actors hold primary authority with military participation but not monopoly. They differ from personalist autocracy because authority remains formally collective; from one-party autocracy because no single party monopolizes while banning alternatives; and from external legitimation when domestic actors exercise primary authority despite external support.

Legitimation through crisis necessity becomes less credible as crises resolve or become normalized. Extended duration without elections reveals either that crises were exaggerated (legitimation was facade for autocratic consolidation) or that new crises perpetually emerge (state failure preventing consolidation). Most non-electoral transitional regimes either consolidate into permanent autocracy as institutional patterns emerge, transition to electoral legitimation through elections, or fragment into renewed conflict. Regimes claiming transitional status while exhibiting consolidation indicators should be recoded as underlying autocracy type. Assessment focuses on whether institutional pattern has emerged beneath transitional rhetoric, not on duration alone.

Operationalization: A regime is coded as non-electoral transitional if it meets all of the following criteria: 1. Electoral Authorization Absent: No executive or legislative elections have conferred governmental authority in the preceding period. This distinguishes non-electoral transitional from all electoral regime types and from democratizing regimes emerging from existing electoral frameworks; 2. Post-Rupture Context: Regime established following regime rupture including revolutionary overthrow, military coup followed by civilian transition without elections, institutional collapse from civil war termination or foreign occupation end, or authoritarian breakdown. This distinguishes non-electoral transitional from stable autocracies undergoing liberalization and from democratizing regimes emerging through negotiated transitions within existing electoral frameworks. 3. Provisional Claim: Regime explicitly claims transitional,

interim, or provisional status through self-designation in official statements or founding documents. This rhetorical claim is necessary but insufficient; regimes making provisional claims but exhibiting consolidated institutional patterns code according to underlying autocracy type. Liberal Legitimation Absent: Regime fails to maintain robust liberal features characterizing democratizing regimes. Assessment must be conducted without ex post bias, coding regimes based on features present at the time regardless of subsequent outcomes. Threshold for democratizing classification requires both civil liberties floor and executive constraints. Civil liberties floor demands at least two of three criteria robustly satisfied: (a) opposition organizing rights across full ideological spectrum without systematic detention or blanket prohibition, (b) multiple independent media outlets operating without systematic post-publication sanctions, (c) violence and detention limited to armed resistance, not targeting peaceful political activity. Executive constraints require genuine multiparty power-sharing where coalition partners can veto major decisions or control key ministries autonomously, exit from coalition threatens regime stability, and decision-making requires consensus among multiple factions.

External validation indicators suggest but do not determine classification. Freedom House scores of „rather free“ (5-6) or better indicate likely sufficient liberal features; „rather not free“ (7-9) suggests insufficient features. V-Dem Political Civil Liberties Index „somewhat present“ or better suggests sufficient features; „not truly present“ suggests insufficient. Qualitative assessment of whether opposition can organize effectively, media operates without fear, and executive power is genuinely constrained takes precedence over quantitative thresholds. If regime satisfies fewer than two of three civil liberties criteria, or lacks genuine executive constraints, classify as non-electoral transitional regardless of electoral promises.

Weak or Absent Electoral Commitment: Either no electoral promises made, or promises lack binding character through vague timeline („when conditions permit“), no institutional preparation, repeated postponements with shifting justifications, or delays attributed to conditions regime itself controls. This criterion is secondary to liberal features. Even regimes with announced election dates code as non-electoral transitional if liberal legitimation is absent.

No Consolidated Autocratic Pattern: Regime is not dominated by any institutional pattern warranting classification as the respective autocracy type from day one regardless of transitional rhetoric.

Military autocracy exists when unified military command hierarchy exercises authority through institutional rank and chain of command. Military-led „transitional“ regimes code as military autocracy regardless of transitional rhetoric, electoral promises, civilian participation in advisory roles, or announced timelines for elections. Test: Can military as unified institution

override civilian decisions? If yes, military autocracy. If military participates but cannot unilaterally override and civilians control key ministries autonomously, assess for non-electoral transitional. Examples of military-led regimes coding as military autocracy include Egypt SCAF (2011-2012), Thailand NCPO (2014-2019), Myanmar SAC (2021+), and Sudan Sovereign Council (2019-2021). Non-electoral transitional requires fragmented armed groups without unified military command or civilian-dominated governance with military participation but not monopoly. If in doubt between military autocracy and non-electoral transitional, code as military autocracy.

One-party autocracy exists when single party monopolizes political organization while banning opposition. Personalist autocracy exists when single leader monopolizes authority through personal loyalty networks. External legitimation exists when foreign military provides essential control or external actors hold veto over key decisions. Ideological autocracy exists when comprehensive doctrine structures all authority. Non-electoral transitional is reserved for regimes where none of these patterns has consolidated.

Consolidation Assessment: Non-electoral transitional classification is based on legitimation pattern, not duration. However, regimes claiming transitional status while exhibiting consolidation indicators should be recoded as underlying autocracy type. Consolidation indicators include unified command hierarchy established, same leadership for more than five years without competition, single-party monopoly, personalist cult developed, or „transitional“ rhetoric unchanged for more than five years with zero electoral progress. Genuine provisional indicators include authority structure remaining fragmented, leadership turnover through coups or coalition reshuffles, state failure conditions preventing consolidation, or elections attempted but failed due to violence rather than regime blocking. Assessment focuses on whether institutional pattern has emerged, not on duration alone.

Examples

Libya 08/01/2011 to 07/07/2012 (National Transitional Council): The NTC exemplifies crisis-necessity legitimation without liberal features. Civil liberties floor not met: Political Isolation Law systematically excluded Gaddafi-era officials beyond reasonable accountability. While some independent media operated, opposition organizing was constrained and repression extended beyond armed loyalists to political exclusion (only 1 of 3 civil liberties criteria satisfied). Executive constraints absent: Revolutionary council dominated by eastern militias (Benghazi, Misrata, Zintan) operated without genuine power-sharing with excluded western/southern factions. Critically, militias operated as independent armed groups without unified military command, distinguishing this from military autocracy. No chain of command coordinated all armed

actors. Electoral commitment weak: elections mentioned but without binding timeline for eight months. Authority derived from revolutionary victory and crisis management. Post-election outcome illustrated absent liberal foundations: Libya descended into civil war (2014) as elections could not legitimate contested authority when pluralism and constraints were never established {Pack, 2012 #47094: 12-18.

Somalia 10/10/2004 to 08/20/2012 (Transitional Federal Government): The TFG demonstrates how genuine fragmentation prevents consolidation into permanent autocracy. Civil liberties minimal: key factions excluded, media operated under restrictions. Executive constraints absent but authority structurally fragmented: TFG controlled minimal territory (parts of Mogadishu only) and faced rival authorities preventing monopoly. Clan-based militias operated without unified command. Ethiopian intervention (2006-2009) and AMISOM presence (2007+) provided external support but did not constitute external legitimation because formal authority remained with Somali TFG. Electoral promises repeatedly postponed but partially credible given genuine security barriers. Classification as non-electoral transitional rather than underlying autocracy justified by state failure: no unified military hierarchy, no personalist consolidation (leadership changed 2009), no party monopoly. Authority remained genuinely provisional because conditions prevented institutional consolidation.

Central African Republic 03/24/2013 to 01/10/2014 (Seleka Coalition): The Seleka coalition under Michel Djotodia exemplifies non-electoral transitional through extreme fragmentation and inability to consolidate authority. Following the seizure of Bangui, Djotodia declared himself „president“ but explicitly described the government as transitional, announcing intentions to organize elections within 18 months. Djotodia assumed presidency but exercised limited control over autonomous militia factions that continued operating independently. Civil liberties absent: systematic violence by competing armed groups and complete security collapse meant no political organizing could occur peacefully. Executive constraints structurally absent: Djotodia could not enforce decisions on component militias operating autonomously in different regions. Electoral promises made but not credible given security conditions. Authority derived from claimed crisis management necessity, not inclusive processes. International pressure led to Djotodia's resignation (01/10/2014) and transition to externally-supervised government. The brief period demonstrates how extreme fragmentation creates non-electoral transitional pattern distinct from consolidated military rule {Lombard, 2016 #47091: 145-158}.

Democratic Republic of Congo 07/17/2003 to 12/06/2006 (Transitional Government): The DRC transitional government illustrates borderline between non-electoral transitional and external legitimation. The power-sharing structure included belligerent factions, with elections

eventually held (07/30/2006). However, each faction retained autonomous military forces, UN peacekeeping provided essential security, and external mediation was critical for maintaining cooperation. Civil liberties extremely limited: all factions committed abuses in controlled territories. Executive constraints nominal: power-sharing represented factional division of territory, not genuine multiparty governance. Classification depends on whether international role coded as essential control (external) or facilitating (non-electoral transitional with support). The eventual elections and transition to electoral government distinguishes this from perpetual state failure (Autesserre 2010: 89-112).

Tunisia 01/17/2011 to 10/23/2011: Tunisia contrasts through robust liberal features enabling democratizing classification. All three civil liberties criteria satisfied: opposition organized freely, media pluralism flourished, repression limited to genuine security threats. Executive constraints present through inclusive government. Authority derived from inclusive procedural legitimation. This created structural conditions for democratization: opposition could organize effectively, executive power faced checks, promises were enforceable. Comparison with Libya (similar revolutionary context, similar timeline, but Libya lacked liberal features) demonstrates that liberal legitimation during transition, not merely electoral promises, distinguishes democratizing from non-electoral transitional patterns (Stepan 2012).

Egypt 02/11/2011 to 06/30/2012 (SCAF): Egypt's SCAF period codes as military autocracy rather than non-electoral transitional despite transitional rhetoric and electoral promises. The decisive distinction: unified military command hierarchy exercised authority from day one. SCAF was composed of top generals ruling through chain of command. Military officers occupied executive positions through military rank; armed forces could enforce decisions through disciplined units. SCAF held unconstrained veto power: dissolved elected parliament unilaterally (06/14/2012), controlled constitutional process, and maintained autonomous security sector. Test: could military as unified institution override civilian decisions? Yes, demonstrably. This differs from non-electoral transitional regimes where authority is genuinely fragmented or civilian-primary with military participation. Military-led regimes with unified command hierarchies code as military autocracy regardless of transitional claims or electoral promises (Brownlee/Masoud/Reynolds 2015: 89-108).

Myanmar 09/18/1988 to 11/07/2010 (SLORC/SPDC): Myanmar illustrates indefinite „transitional“ rhetoric masking consolidated military autocracy. From inception, SLORC was unified military command ruling through institutional hierarchy. Officers coordinated through chain of command. When elections were held (1990), results were ignored and NLD leaders detained. The 22-year „transition“ demonstrates fake transitional claims: indefinite duration, unchanging

rhetoric, clear institutional consolidation. Classification as military autocracy reflects de facto authority structure (unified military command) rather than regime's self-description. Non-electoral transitional requires genuinely fragmented authority, which Myanmar never exhibited.

Spain 11/18/1976 to 04/01/1977: Spain's early transition codes as electoral autocracy (liberalizing) rather than democratizing or non-electoral transitional, illustrating ex post bias elimination. Classification reflects features at the time: Freedom House 8 („rather not free“), political liberties „absent,“ Communist Party illegal. These place Spain below democratizing threshold and outside typical non-electoral transitional rupture context (continuity from Franco regime, not post-rupture). Only after PCE legalization (April 1977) did liberal features meet democratizing threshold. The case demonstrates regimes can transition through electoral autocracy to democratizing to democracy without passing through non-electoral transitional pattern. Methodologically, this illustrates coding without ex post bias: Spain is not classified as democratizing merely because democratization succeeded (Share 1986).

6.3. Regimes Based on Personalist Legitimation

Regimes grouped under this heading structure authority around specific persons or lineages rather than procedures, doctrines, or organizational structures. This personalist legitimation pattern prescribes that the right to rule inheres in the identity of the ruler. The legitimation pattern describes how authority is structured around specific persons or dynasties, irrespective of whether claims about the ruler's exceptional qualities or sacred lineage are credible or believed. Authority is fundamentally non-transferable through impersonal procedural mechanisms. Legitimacy remains bound to particular persons or dynasties, making the question of who rules central rather than incidental to the regime's claim to authority. This distinguishes personalist regimes from those structured around electoral legitimation (where authority derives from electoral procedures regardless of whether elections are free and fair), ideological regimes (where leaders derive legitimacy through doctrinal commitment regardless of personal identity), and military regimes (where authority derives from organizational position rather than individual attributes).

Within this pattern, regimes differ in whether personalist legitimacy operates through institutionalized hereditary succession or through individualized rule detached from stable institutional frameworks. Monarchies represent the institutionalized form, embedding authority in dynasties through the hereditary principle and establishing formal rules of succession that ensure continuity across generations. Personalist autocracies exemplify the non-institutionalized

form, concentrating power in the person of the ruler while systematically weakening or subordinating formal institutions. Authority becomes personalized rather than institutionalized, operating through networks of patronage and coercion that center on the ruler. Without institutionalized mechanisms of succession, leadership transitions remain unpredictable, and regime continuity depends on the ruler's capacity to control patronage networks and coercive forces rather than on formal or hereditary principles.

6.3.1. Monarchy

Regimes grouped under this heading are ruling monarchies in which political authority derives from hereditary succession and dynastic continuity. Monarchical legitimation rests on the principle that certain families possess a sacred or inherent right to rule, transmitted through bloodline across generations. Historically, this legitimation pattern has been grounded in doctrines of divine right, which assert that monarchs are appointed by God or cosmic order and thus accountable to transcendent rather than popular authority. The claim to rule emanates not from electoral mandate, ideological truth, or institutional achievement, but from the sanctity of lineage and the continuity of dynastic succession. Even where religious justifications have weakened, monarchical legitimation continues to draw on tradition, the mystique of royal blood, and the symbolic embodiment of national identity in the person of the monarch. Crowns, scepters, thrones, and elaborate ceremonial rituals reinforce the exceptionality of monarchical authority, distinguishing it from the procedural or doctrinal foundations of other regime types (Spellman 2004, Thieme 2017).

This legitimation pattern fundamentally differentiates monarchies from regimes structured around competing principles. Electoral regimes derive authority from popular choice expressed through institutional procedures. Ideological regimes ground their claim in doctrinal blueprints asserting universal truths about history or society. Military regimes justify rule through organizational command structures and narratives of crisis intervention. Personalist regimes center authority on individual charisma detached from institutional or familial foundations. Monarchies, by contrast, embed authority in the dynasty itself. The monarch does not create legitimacy through personal qualities or achievements but inherits it through birth, making the institution rather than the individual the source of political authority. This dynastic principle implies that legitimacy is neither earned nor conferred but simply exists by virtue of succession, rendering monarchical rule conceptually independent of performance, ideology, or popular approval.

A regime is classified as a monarchy when the head of state holds a recognized monarchical title (such as King, Queen, Emperor, Empress, Shah, Tsar, or Emir) and exercises actual political power beyond ceremonial functions. Parliamentary monarchies, where the monarch retains symbolic status but exercises no real governmental authority, are not classified as ruling monarchies. The defining criterion is whether the monarch actively participates in governance and decision-making, shaping the institutional architecture of the regime through monarchical authority.

Within this legitimation pattern, monarchies vary substantially in the degree of institutional constraint on monarchical power. Autocratic monarchies represent the most concentrated form. Executive authority is vested in the monarch without effective checks from elected institutions, and the regime lacks meaningful separation of powers. Constitutional monarchies, by contrast, operate within frameworks where elected parliaments exercise genuine legislative authority and judicial institutions provide at least moderate constraints on executive power. While the monarch retains significant influence and formal authority, power is shared with representative institutions that limit autocratic rule. This distinction between autocratic and constitutional forms reflects differences in institutional pluralism rather than in the fundamental legitimation pattern, which remains grounded in hereditary succession in both cases (Kailitz 2009). In the detailed classification, monarchies are differentiated into these two subtypes. In the compact classification, both forms are grouped under ruling monarchy. Transitions between autocratic and constitutional monarchy are coded as regime change in the detailed variant but as regime continuity in the compact variant when the dynasty remains unchanged.

6.3.1.1. Autocratic Monarchy

Conceptualization: Autocratic monarchies concentrate executive, legislative, and often judicial authority in the hands of the monarch without effective institutional constraints. Within the broader monarchical legitimation pattern of hereditary dynastic succession, the autocratic variant is distinguished by the absence of meaningful separation of powers or institutional pluralism. Authority flows from hereditary right alone, operating through a single legitimation pattern rather than being shared with elected institutions. Where legislatures exist, they function as consultative or symbolic bodies without capacity to constrain core monarchical decisions or initiate removal of the monarch or appointed officials.

Monarchical legitimation historically varies in intensity of transcendent claims. European absolute monarchies employed divine right doctrines, asserting monarchs are appointed by God and accountable to transcendent authority. More extreme forms claimed the monarch possessed

divine or semi-divine nature: Japan venerated the Emperor as *arahitogami* (living deity), creating legitimation through inherent sacred essence rather than divine appointment. Ethiopia's Solomonic dynasty claimed the Emperor was God's elect descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Contemporary autocratic monarchies typically employ weaker transcendent claims, emphasizing dynastic continuity, traditional sanctity, and religious authority (as in Gulf monarchies' alliances with religious establishments) rather than explicit divine nature. These variations affect symbolic architecture and ceremonial intensity but share the core logic: authority derives from the monarch's special status rather than popular choice or institutional achievement.

The boundary with constitutional monarchy is defined by dual legitimation. Constitutional monarchies operate through two coexisting legitimation patterns: hereditary monarchical succession and electoral parliamentary representation. Both the monarch and elected parliament possess real authority, with power shared through institutional frameworks creating genuine constraints on monarchical rule. The monarch retains substantial executive authority but cannot govern unilaterally; parliament exercises legislative authority and can constrain executive decisions through budget control, legislative oversight, and institutional checks. In autocratic monarchies, only monarchical legitimation operates. Parliaments serve consultative or symbolic functions without capacity to genuinely constrain the monarch's core decisions. Authority flows from hereditary right alone, not shared with elected institutions.

Autocratic monarchy encompasses cases where the monarch delegates day-to-day governance to a prime minister or similar figure exercising extensive power on the ruler's behalf. In these instances, the prime minister functions as extension of monarchical control, entirely dependent on and accountable to the monarch rather than operating as independent executive constrained by elected institutions. Executive power remains autocratic in nature even if not personally exercised by the monarch in every decision, as authority flows from the monarch's hereditary position and all officials serve at monarchical pleasure.

The boundary with personalist autocracy requires careful specification, particularly regarding rulers who adopt monarchical titles. The critical distinction lies in the legitimation pattern and institutional embedding of hereditary succession. In autocratic monarchies, authority derives from dynastic hereditary right institutionalized through formal succession mechanisms, whether embedded in centuries of tradition or established through initial generations of functional succession. The dynasty, not the individual ruler, constitutes the source of legitimacy. In personalist autocracies, authority remains bound to the individual ruler's personal identity even

when monarchical titles are adopted, operating through personal loyalty networks without institutionalized hereditary transfer mechanisms.

Three factors distinguish autocratic monarchy from personalist autocracy with monarchical symbolism. First, the legitimation pattern must center on hereditary dynastic right rather than personal qualities or achievements. The regime justifies authority through bloodline succession, not through the ruler's individual characteristics. Second, hereditary succession must be institutionalized through formal rules and mechanisms that can organize power transfer within the dynasty. Self-proclaimed titles without functional succession mechanisms constitute personalist rule regardless of monarchical costume. Third, either the country must possess historical monarchical traditions that the regime inherits and continues, or the dynasty itself must demonstrate continuity through successful hereditary transfers proving the institutional viability of dynastic succession.

Elite composition in autocratic monarchies reflects the hereditary principle combined with royal patronage. Royal family members occupy privileged positions by birth rather than through institutional advancement, personal loyalty networks, military rank, or ideological credentials. Monarchs also appoint supporting elites dependent on royal favor. Cohesion mechanisms center on dynastic loyalty, traditional hierarchies, and patronage from the monarch.

Operationalization: A regime is classified as autocratic monarchy when four cumulative criteria are satisfied. First, the head of state must hold a recognized monarchical title (King, Queen, Emperor, Empress, Shah, Sultan, Emir, or equivalent) designating hereditary authority. Recognized monarchical title means domestic and international acknowledgment of hereditary dynastic status, not merely self-proclaimed titles without institutional foundation. Emirs, Sultans, and other hereditary rulers of historically recognized polities qualify as monarchical titles even when governing smaller territories.

Second, the monarch must exercise actual political power beyond ceremonial functions, actively participating in governance and decision-making that shapes the institutional architecture. The monarch must make or substantially influence core political decisions regarding appointments, policy, legislation, or state direction.

Third, executive authority must be concentrated in the monarch without effective institutional checks from elected bodies or meaningful separation of powers. In autocratic monarchies, legislatures (if they exist) lack genuine capacity to constrain executive decisions, pass legislation against monarchical opposition, or remove the monarch or appointed officials through institutional procedures. The monarch rules by decree or dominates the legislative process, making core political decisions without requiring parliamentary approval or facing institutional

accountability. Judicial institutions similarly lack independence to check executive authority. Where prime ministers exercise substantial governmental authority, they must function as extensions of monarchical control, serving at the monarch's pleasure and remaining accountable to the monarch rather than to elected institutions.

The boundary with constitutional monarchy requires assessing whether genuine dual legitimation operates. When parliaments possess real legislative authority including budget control, can constrain executive decisions through institutional mechanisms, and the monarch requires parliamentary cooperation to govern effectively, classify as constitutional monarchy. The diagnostic test is whether the monarch can govern core policy areas unilaterally or must negotiate with parliament possessing autonomous authority. When the monarch retains ultimate control over budgets, can dissolve parliament at will without institutional constraint, and governs core areas (military, security, foreign policy) without requiring parliamentary approval, classify as autocratic monarchy regardless of parliamentary forms. The threshold is genuine power-sharing between hereditary and electoral legitimation versus monarchical monopoly with consultative facades.

Fourth, hereditary succession must be institutionalized through either long-standing dynastic continuity or demonstrated functional succession within a newly established dynasty. The regime must possess formal or traditional mechanisms specifying how authority transfers within the dynasty. For recently established dynasties (within the last century), at least one successful hereditary succession must have occurred, proving the institutional viability of dynastic transfer. Self-proclaimed monarchies without such succession remain classified as personalist autocracies until hereditary transfer demonstrates that legitimation pattern has shifted from personal to dynastic.

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases

Saudi Arabia under the Al Saud dynasty (1932-present) represents paradigmatic autocratic monarchy with deep dynastic roots. The Al Saud family established hereditary rule as Emirs of Diriyah in 1744, governing through successive Saudi states before Ibn Saud proclaimed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, representing nearly 300 years of dynastic continuity. The king holds ultimate executive, legislative, and judicial authority, ruling by royal decree. The Consultative Council (Majlis ash-Shura) is appointed by the monarch and lacks legislative power, serving purely advisory functions. Political parties are banned, competitive elections do not occur, and civil liberties are severely restricted. Legitimation rests on dynastic continuity combined with religious authority through the historical alliance with the Wahhabi

establishment, with the king serving as „Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques“ (Commins 2006). Succession occurs through the royal family according to hereditary principles, with multiple successful successions (1953, 1964, 1975, 1982, 2005, 2015, 2024).

Japan under the Meiji Emperor and successors (1868-1945) exemplified autocratic monarchy with extreme divine legitimation. The Meiji Constitution (1889) designated the Emperor as „sacred and inviolable,“ concentrating sovereignty in the imperial person. The Emperor was venerated as *arahitogami* (living deity) descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, transcending European divine right by claiming inherent divine essence. The Imperial Diet existed but served consultative functions without capacity to constrain imperial authority. The Diet could not pass legislation without imperial approval, possessed no budget control independent of the Emperor, and exercised no oversight. While oligarchs (*genrō*) and later military factions exercised *de facto* power, all authority required legitimation through imperial sanction. The 1945-1947 transition, where Emperor Hirohito renounced divinity and accepted the postwar constitution establishing parliamentary sovereignty, transformed Japan from autocratic monarchy to constitutional monarchy (and subsequently liberal democracy with ceremonial monarchy), demonstrating how fundamental change in legitimation pattern alters regime classification (Gluck 1985).

Ethiopia under Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974) exemplified autocratic monarchy with divine appointment legitimation. The Ethiopian monarchy claimed descent from the Solomonic dynasty, tracing lineage to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Haile Selassie bore the title „Conquering Lion of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia.“ The 1955 constitution concentrated sovereignty in the Emperor, who held absolute executive, legislative, and judicial authority. Parliament possessed no genuine legislative power; the Emperor could dissolve it, veto legislation without override possibility, and ruled by decree. Legitimation operated through the Solomonic dynasty's ancient lineage, the Emperor's designation as God's elect, and Ethiopian Orthodox Church recognition of imperial authority. The 1974 revolution by the Derg military committee ended the monarchy, demonstrating that even centuries-old sacred legitimation could not withstand internal pressure combined with economic crisis (Marcus 1994).

Just-inside Cases: Iran under the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1941) illuminates the threshold between personalist autocracy and newly established monarchy. Reza Khan came to power through military means and crowned himself Reza Shah in 1925 after deposing the Qajar dynasty. Three factors support borderline monarchy classification. First, Persia possessed millennia of monarchical institutional history which Pahlavi inherited even as a new dynasty. Second, successful hereditary succession occurred in 1941 when Mohammad Reza Shah succeeded his

father. Third, legitimation centered on hereditary right to the Persian throne rather than personal military achievements. The 1925-1941 period represents a borderline phase where personalist origins coexisted with monarchical institutionalization. The 1941 succession confirmed transformation from personalist to monarchical legitimation pattern, contrasting with King Zog where no succession occurred and no historical monarchical tradition existed to embed the new dynasty.

Just-outside Cases: King Zog of Albania (1928-1939) contrasts as personalist autocracy despite monarchical title. Ahmed Bey Zogu served as President (1925-1928) before proclaiming himself King Zog I in 1928. However, authority remained grounded in personal networks from his strongman origins. Albania possessed no historical monarchical traditions, and Zog's monarchy was invented without institutional roots. The regime never achieved dynastic succession; Zog's son Leka was born in 1939 shortly before Italian invasion ended the regime. Legitimation rested on Zog's personal authority, with monarchical title functioning as enhancement of personal rule rather than transformation to dynastic legitimation. This demonstrates that monarchical titles alone are insufficient; hereditary succession must be institutionalized through either historical tradition or demonstrated functional transfer (Fischer 1984).

The German Empire (1871-1918) contrasts as constitutional monarchy, demonstrating dual legitimation. The Kaiser held substantial executive authority through the Hohenzollern dynasty, appointed the Reichskanzler, commanded the military, and directed foreign policy. However, the Reichstag (elected parliament) exercised genuine legislative authority including crucial budget control. The Reichskanzler required parliamentary cooperation to pass legislation and secure funding. Both legitimation patterns operated: the Kaiser could not govern unilaterally without parliamentary approval for budgets, while parliament could not govern without the Kaiser's executive authority. This power-sharing through dual legitimation distinguishes constitutional from autocratic monarchy. The contrast with Saudi Arabia is fundamental: the Saudi king determines budgets unilaterally through royal decree, while the German Kaiser negotiated with the Reichstag possessing autonomous authority to approve or reject budgets (Anderson 2000, Mommsen 1995).

6.3.1.2. Constitutional Monarchy

Conceptualization: Constitutional monarchies structure authority through dual legitimation combining hereditary monarchical succession with electoral parliamentary representation. Both the monarch and elected parliament constitute autonomous power bases with real political authority, and governing coalitions are formed, sustained, and constrained through

institutionalized interaction between these two sources of legitimacy. This dual legitimation pattern distinguishes constitutional from autocratic monarchies (where only monarchical legitimation operates) and from liberal democracies with ceremonial monarchies (where only electoral legitimation operates substantively).

The hereditary monarch retains substantial executive authority, including powers over appointments, policy influence, and state direction, but cannot govern unilaterally. Parliament exercises genuine legislative authority including budget control, can constrain executive decisions through institutional mechanisms, and participates meaningfully in governance. The monarch requires parliamentary cooperation to govern effectively, and parliament requires monarchical executive authority to function. Neither legitimation source can govern alone, necessitating institutional power-sharing.

Monarchical legitimation in constitutional monarchies typically employs moderate transcendent claims rather than extreme divine right or sacred nature assertions. Contemporary constitutional and ceremonial monarchies emphasize traditional authority, national symbolism, and constitutional continuity rather than explicit god-given rule (Bogdanor 1995). The monarch embodies historical continuity and national unity through hereditary succession, but legitimacy increasingly derives from constitutional position within hybridized frameworks rather than from divine appointment or inherent sacred status. This represents partial shift from transcendent to constitutional-legal legitimation while maintaining hereditary succession as essential component.

The boundary with autocratic monarchy hinges on whether genuine power-sharing through dual legitimation exists. In autocratic monarchies, parliaments (if present) serve consultative functions without capacity to genuinely constrain core monarchical decisions. The monarch retains ultimate control over budgets, can dissolve parliament without institutional constraint, and governs core areas (military, security, foreign policy) without requiring parliamentary approval. In constitutional monarchies, parliaments possess autonomous authority to approve or reject budgets, constrain executive actions through legislative mechanisms, and exercise meaningful oversight. The diagnostic test is whether the monarch can govern unilaterally or must negotiate with parliament possessing real constraining power.

The boundary with liberal democracies featuring ceremonial monarchies requires specification based on the effective head of executive. In liberal democracies (Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Netherlands), monarchs retain purely symbolic status without real governmental authority. Executive power resides entirely in prime ministers and cabinets accountable to elected parliaments. The monarch performs ceremonial functions (state openings, royal assent) but

exercises no substantive influence over policy, appointments, or governance. Electoral legitimation operates exclusively; monarchical legitimation is purely symbolic overlay. Classification follows the effective head of executive: when executive authority flows through elected officials accountable to parliament, classify as liberal democracy regardless of ceremonial monarchical retention.

Critically, the shift from ruling to ceremonial monarchy does not automatically produce liberal democracy. When monarchs lose real authority, classification depends on which actors constitute the effective executive and what legitimation pattern structures governance. If executive power flows through elected officials accountable to robust parliaments with political liberties, classify as liberal democracy with ceremonial monarchy. If executive power flows through military hierarchies, single-party structures, or other autocratic mechanisms, classify according to the actual legitimation pattern regardless of ceremonial monarchical retention. Thailand during military rule (2014-2019) exemplifies this: the monarch served ceremonial-legitimizing functions while the military junta held effective executive authority, warranting military autocracy classification (Chambers and Waitoolkiat 2016). The diagnostic test is always: who is the effective head of executive and what legitimation pattern structures authority? Monarchical status (ruling vs. ceremonial) is necessary but insufficient for regime classification without identifying the operative legitimation pattern.

In constitutional monarchies, the monarch exercises real executive authority as effective or co-equal head of executive. The monarch actively participates in governance through appointment powers, policy influence, convening/dissolving parliament (within constitutional constraints), and executive decision-making. While constrained by parliament, the monarch shapes institutional architecture and governmental direction. Executive authority is genuinely shared between hereditary monarch and elected institutions rather than residing exclusively in parliamentary-accountable officials.

Elite composition reflects dual legitimation. Royal family members occupy positions through hereditary privilege, while ministers and officials increasingly require parliamentary confidence alongside monarchical appointment. Cohesion mechanisms combine dynastic loyalty with parliamentary accountability. Elite recruitment operates through both hereditary succession (for monarchy) and electoral/parliamentary processes (for governmental officials). Cross-regime networks may form among constitutional monarchies sharing the challenge of balancing traditional hereditary authority with democratic institutional constraints.

Operationalization: A regime is classified as constitutional monarchy when five cumulative criteria are satisfied. First, the head of state must hold a recognized monarchical title designating

hereditary authority, and the monarchy must retain real political power beyond ceremonial functions. The monarch must actively participate in governance through appointment powers, executive influence, or institutional authority that shapes political outcomes. Purely ceremonial monarchies where executive power resides exclusively in elected officials are classified according to the effective head of executive (typically liberal democracy).

Second, a popularly elected parliament must exist possessing genuine legislative authority. Parliament must exercise real power to pass legislation, approve budgets, constrain executive actions through institutional mechanisms, and provide meaningful oversight. The parliament cannot be purely consultative or symbolic; it must possess autonomous authority to block, modify, or approve governmental initiatives. Competitive parliamentary elections are required to ground electoral legitimation as a real authority source. Suffrage breadth is evaluated contextually: when suffrage is materially restricted, coders must assess whether parliamentary representation still functions as an independent power base capable of constraining monarchical authority, or whether restriction reduces parliament to oligarchic representation of elites aligned with the crown. The threshold test is whether parliament constitutes a structurally autonomous power base that can and does constrain executive action against monarchical preferences, not merely whether elections occur.

Third, parliament must at least moderately constrain the executive. This constraint operates through multiple mechanisms: budget approval requiring parliamentary consent, legislative oversight the executive cannot simply override, capacity to question and hold ministers accountable, and institutional checks on unilateral executive action. The threshold is genuine constraining power, not merely advisory functions. The monarch cannot govern core policy areas without parliamentary cooperation, and parliament possesses institutional means to block or modify monarchical decisions.

Fourth, the judiciary must at least moderately constrain the executive. Judicial institutions must possess meaningful independence to review executive actions, interpret constitutional provisions, and provide legal checks on governmental power. Courts need not possess full judicial review authority over all matters, but must exercise real judicial independence constraining arbitrary executive action. The combination of parliamentary and judicial constraints creates institutional pluralism limiting monarchical unilateralism.

Fifth, political liberties cannot be entirely absent. Citizens must possess basic freedoms enabling political participation, expression, and association sufficient to support competitive elections and parliamentary functions. Constitutional monarchies blend democratic elements

(elections, parliamentary authority, political liberties) with monarchical authority (hereditary executive power, royal prerogatives).

The boundary with autocratic monarchy is crossed when parliament gains genuine constraining power through budget control and legislative authority that the monarch cannot simply override. When the monarch must negotiate with parliament possessing autonomous authority, and parliament can block governmental initiatives, dual legitimation operates. Morocco and Jordan, despite elected parliaments, remain autocratic because monarchs retain ultimate control without requiring genuine parliamentary cooperation for core governance. Bhutan post-2008 crosses the threshold because parliament exercises real legislative authority and budget control that constrains even the king's substantial residual powers.

The boundary with democracy is crossed when executive authority shifts from shared (monarch and parliament) to exclusively parliamentary-accountable. When prime ministers and cabinets govern without requiring monarchical approval or input beyond ceremonial functions, and the monarch exercises no real influence over policy or appointments, classify as liberal democracy. Norway exemplifies this threshold: despite constitutional provisions granting the king powers, actual governance flows entirely through the Storting (parliament) and prime minister, with the king performing only ceremonial roles. The effective head of executive test determines classification.

Examples

Paradigmatic Case: Bhutan since 2008 exemplifies constitutional monarchy following the transition from autocratic to constitutional framework. The 2008 constitution established dual legitimation combining the hereditary Wangchuck dynasty with elected parliamentary institutions (United Nations Development Programme 2018). The Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) retains substantial formal authority including appointing key officials (judges, election commissioners), commanding the armed forces, and influencing executive decisions as head of state. However, the National Assembly (lower house) is elected through universal suffrage and exercises real legislative authority including budget approval. The National Council (upper house, partially elected) provides additional legislative input.

The king cannot govern unilaterally. Parliamentary approval is required for budgets and legislation, creating genuine constraints on executive action. The prime minister leads the government and must maintain parliamentary confidence, though appointed by the king from the majority party. Ministers require both royal appointment and parliamentary accountability, embodying dual legitimation. The judiciary exercises meaningful independence in interpreting

the constitution and reviewing governmental actions. Political parties compete in free elections, and civil liberties exist (though with limitations), supporting democratic elements.

The regime blends monarchical and democratic authority. The king retains significant influence through appointment powers, constitutional interpretation authority, and traditional reverence, but shares power with elected institutions possessing autonomous authority. Parliament can constrain executive decisions through budget control and legislative oversight, and the king must work within constitutional frameworks requiring parliamentary cooperation. This power-sharing through dual legitimation distinguishes Bhutan from both autocratic monarchy (where parliament lacks genuine constraining power) and liberal democracy with ceremonial monarchy (where the monarch exercises no real authority).

Just-inside Case: Tonga since 2010 illustrates constitutional monarchy at the boundary with democracy. The 2010 constitutional reforms transferred most executive powers from the monarch to a cabinet of elected leaders, with the prime minister now selected by the Legislative Assembly rather than appointed by the king (Powles 2014). The people's representatives constitute nearly 70 percent of parliament, and a vote of no confidence mechanism now exists. The king is formally no longer part of the executive and cannot intervene directly in day-to-day administration.

However, King Tupou VI retains substantial reserve powers including authority to veto legislation, dissolve parliament, appoint judicial officials, and approve constitutional changes. The monarch maintains absolute discretion over Privy Council appointments and exercises royal prerogatives where constitutional gaps exist. The threshold question is whether the king's retained powers constitute genuine executive authority warranting constitutional monarchy classification or merely reserve powers within an essentially parliamentary system warranting liberal democracy classification. The king's capacity to dissolve parliament and veto legislation indicates continued dual legitimation, supporting constitutional monarchy classification. However, the shift of day-to-day executive authority to elected officials means Tonga represents the closest approach to the democracy boundary among contemporary constitutional monarchies.

Just-outside Cases: Hungary (1900-1918), Jordan under Abdullah II, Thailand (2014-2019), and Norway illustrate regimes that superficially resemble constitutional monarchy but are classified differently based on the operationalized criteria.

Hungary under the Dual Monarchy (1900-1918) possessed formal constitutional monarchy features: Emperor Franz Joseph served as King of Hungary, and the Hungarian Diet exercised legislative authority with the minister-president requiring parliamentary support. However, classification as autocratic monarchy is warranted because electoral legitimation did not

function as a genuine autonomous power base. Suffrage was restricted to approximately six percent of the population, systematically excluding non-Magyar populations and lower classes (Gerő 2014). Open voting enabled systematic pressure on voters, and electoral manipulation was pervasive. The parliament represented Magyar oligarchic elites whose interests largely aligned with crown authority rather than constituting an independent power base capable of constraining monarchical preferences. The minister-president formally required parliamentary confidence, but parliament itself was not grounded in genuine electoral legitimation functioning as autonomous authority. Hungary therefore falls just outside constitutional monarchy classification because the second criterion (parliament as autonomous power base through genuine electoral legitimation) is not satisfied, even though formal parliamentary constraints existed.

Jordan under Abdullah II (1999-present) possesses formal constitutional monarchy features: elected Chamber of Deputies, multi-party competition, and constitutional provisions establishing parliamentary system. However, classification as autocratic monarchy persists because the king retains ultimate control without requiring genuine parliamentary cooperation for core governance. The king appoints and dismisses the prime minister and cabinet (Articles 35-40 of the Jordanian Constitution), appoints the Senate, and can dissolve the elected House of Representatives, so that executive survival and executive formation do not hinge on parliamentary majorities as an enforceable constraint. Even where parliamentary approval is constitutionally relevant in specific domains, the king's prerogatives over dissolution, appointment, and decree-based exercise of royal powers reduce the Chamber's capacity to function as an autonomous power base that compels negotiation over core governance, especially in security and foreign policy, where monarchical discretion remains decisive (Bank/Schlumberger 2004). Parliament performs limited legislative and representative functions, but does not supply the second, co-equal pillar of authority that constitutional monarchy requires because monarchical authority can be exercised without sustained dependence on parliamentary cooperation.

Thailand under military rule (2014-2019) retained a hereditary monarch (King Vajiralongkorn succeeded King Bhumibol in 2016), but the monarch served ceremonial-legitimizing functions while the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) military junta held effective executive authority. General Prayuth Chan-ocha served as both junta leader and prime minister, with the military dominating all organs of government (Chambers/Waitookiat 2016). The NCPO suspended most of the constitution, banned political gatherings, censored media, and ruled by decree under Article 44 of the interim constitution, which granted the junta leader unchecked powers. Despite the monarchy's symbolic centrality to Thai political culture, executive authority flowed through military command hierarchies rather than through any form of dual

legitimation combining monarchical and parliamentary authority. Thailand is classified as military autocracy for this period. The case demonstrates that ceremonial monarchical retention does not determine regime classification; the operative legitimation pattern of the effective executive does.

Norway exemplifies liberal democracy with ceremonial monarchy. The Norwegian Constitution formally grants the king substantial powers, including command of the armed forces and authority to appoint the government. In constitutional reality, however, executive authority flows entirely through the Storting (parliament) and the prime minister. The king performs only ceremonial functions: opening parliament, formally appointing governments that command parliamentary majorities, and representing the state on ceremonial occasions. The monarch exercises no substantive influence over policy, appointments, or governance. When the effective head of executive is the prime minister accountable to parliament, and the monarch's constitutional powers remain entirely unexercised, electoral legitimation operates exclusively. Norway is classified as liberal democracy, not constitutional monarchy, despite hereditary monarchical retention. The case demonstrates that the presence of a monarch is insufficient for constitutional monarchy classification; the monarch must exercise real executive authority as effective or co-equal head of executive.

6.3.2. Personalist Autocracy

Conceptualization: Personalist autocracies concentrate political authority in the hands of an individual ruler whose power is not effectively constrained by formal institutions (Brooker 2008: 139, Jackson/Rosberg 1982: 8). The regime's architecture is organized around the ruler as the central locus of authority, rather than parties, doctrines, or military hierarchies. This concentration of power is actively produced through the systematic weakening, subordination, or destruction of institutions that could limit or replace the ruler. Authority thus becomes personalized and is exercised through coercive and patronage networks that ensure direct dependence on the ruler. This personalization is not merely descriptive but represents a functional necessity: as formal institutions are systematically weakened, the ruler must construct alternative control mechanisms through direct patronage distribution and personalized command over coercive forces to ensure compliance and policy implementation.

Personalist autocrats do not govern through credible procedures, inherited rights, or ideological doctrines but through constructed images of indispensability and strength. These rulers portray themselves as the embodiment of the nation's unity, often using personality cults, rituals of loyalty, and symbolic acts of beneficence to render their rule as inevitable and unchallengeable.

However, these symbols function as institutional mechanisms of control rather than as expressions of genuine charisma. Succession remains inherently unstable, as the continuity of the regime depends on the ruler's personal capacity to maintain coercive control and distribute patronage, not on rules or norms that can ensure transfer of power.

Operationalization: A regime is coded as personalist autocracy when the structure of authority centers on the ruler personally and institutions that could constrain or replace the ruler are systematically neutralized or subordinated. The essential criteria are (1) the concentration of executive power in one person, (2) the absence of effective institutional checks, and (3) the non-institutionalized nature of succession. The absence of effective institutional checks refers to situations where formal bodies such as legislatures, courts, or party organs lack the de facto capacity to constrain the ruler's core decisions or initiate his removal through established procedures. In quantitative datasets such as Polity, paradigmatic cases typically exhibit scores indicating unlimited executive authority, while just-inside cases with semi-institutionalized features may show slight institutional limitations that upon qualitative examination prove to be facades rather than genuine constraints. Auxiliary indicators include pervasive patronage networks, personalized control of the coercive apparatus, and enforced displays of loyalty to the leader. The absence of competitive executive elections or genuine intraparty selection mechanisms confirms the classification.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Uganda under Idi Amin (1971–1979) and Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko (1965–1997) exemplify personalist autocracy in its purest form. Amin rapidly dismantled both the military hierarchy and bureaucratic authority, creating a system in which personal loyalty and coercion substituted for institutional rules. Mobutu institutionalized personalism by fusing the ruling party, the army, and the state bureaucracy into extensions of his will, ensuring that all power relationships were mediated through him personally. In both cases, patronage networks and the security apparatus, rather than ideology or procedures, structured political life.

Just-inside Cases: Turkmenistan under Saparmurat Niyazov (1990–2006) and Libya under Muammar Gaddafi (1969–2011) represent semi-institutionalized variants where personalist patterns coexist with partially retained institutional structures. In Turkmenistan, the personality cult and direct control over coercion clearly fit the personalist pattern, but remnants of Soviet-era party and bureaucratic structures retained some administrative autonomy. In Libya, Gaddafi's Jamahiriya system created a facade of direct democracy through people's committees while actual authority remained personalized. These Just-inside cases reveal that partial institutionalization does not preclude classification as personalist if ultimate authority depends on

the ruler personally and institutional structures function as instruments of personal rule rather than as genuine constraints.

Contrasting Cases: Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China, though centered on powerful leaders with pervasive personality cults, are not coded as personalist autocracies but as communist ideocracies. Despite massive purges and ritualized leader worship, Stalin and Mao ruled within doctrinal and organizational frameworks that survived them. The critical distinction manifests in succession: following Stalin's and Mao's deaths, the Communist Party as an institution managed the transfer of power, however brutal. Upon the death or removal of personalist rulers such as Amin, Mobutu, or Gaddafi, regime structures collapsed into power vacuums or civil conflict, precisely because no institution existed to organize succession independent of the ruler's personal authority.

Just-outside Case: Russia under Putin (2003–present) illustrates the upper boundary of electoral autocracy where advancing personalization approaches but does not cross the threshold into personalist autocracy. The case is genuinely contested in the literature, and the arguments for personalist classification are substantial. Elite recruitment increasingly reflects personal loyalty to Putin over institutional criteria, with the Siloviki networks and the Ozero circle structuring core decisions in security, energy, and foreign policy outside formal institutional channels. The security apparatus is functionally Putin-centric rather than institutionally autonomous. Formal accountability mechanisms have been systematically dismantled over two decades, and regime legitimation as measured by survey data rests overwhelmingly on Putin's personal authority rather than on institutional or procedural claims.

Three factors nonetheless keep Russia just outside personalist autocracy classification. First, United Russia retains genuine if constrained organizational capacity, functioning as a real mobilization and patronage distribution network rather than a purely personal instrument, distinguishing it from the Colorado Party under Stroessner which was comprehensively subordinated to the ruler's person. Second, regional and bureaucratic governance continues to operate through institutional channels that retain meaningful autonomy from personal direction in routine domains, indicating that institutional structures have been degraded but not comprehensively hollowed out. Third, and most decisively, the subordination of institutions to personal networks remains incomplete at the level of the state apparatus as a whole: key decisions in security and foreign policy flow through personal channels, but fiscal, administrative, and legislative processes retain sufficient institutional coherence to distinguish the regime from paradigmatic personalist cases where the entire state apparatus is reorganized around the ruler's person.

Russia thus represents a case where personalization is advanced enough to place it at the outer boundary of personalist autocracy, making it genuinely difficult to classify, but where residual institutional coherence across the state apparatus as a whole keeps it within electoral autocracy.

6.4. Regimes Based on an Ideology-Centered Legitimation Autocracies

Regimes grouped under this heading are structured around an ideological blueprint that defines the legitimate sources, scope, and exercise of political power. This legitimation pattern prescribes how authority is organized, justified, and reproduced within the regime. It determines the relationship between ruler and ruled, the role of ideology in institutional design, and the acceptable boundaries of political action. Ideology operates not merely as a claim to truth but as the constitutive architecture of rule, shaping institutions, laws, and the distribution of authority. This ideological form of legitimation distinguishes these regimes fundamentally from those structured around electoral procedures (democracies, electoral autocracies), hereditary succession (monarchies), military command structures (military autocracies), or personalist networks (personalist autocracies).

Ideology-centered autocracies encompass three primary ideological families: communist, right-wing extremist, and Islamist. Each represents a distinct doctrinal foundation for political authority. Communist regimes derive legitimation from Marxist-Leninist doctrine claiming to fulfill the laws of historical materialism. Right-wing extremist regimes ground authority in ultranationalist, corporatist, or racist ideologies emphasizing hierarchy, order, and exclusion. Islamist regimes base legitimation on religious doctrine asserting that governance must conform to Islamic law and principles.

Across these ideological families, regimes vary substantially in the scope and transformative ambition of their ideological commitment. Ideocratic autocracies establish a totalizing legitimation pattern in which all institutions and social relations are subordinated to a comprehensive ideological vision that seeks to fundamentally reshape society (Backes/Kailitz 2016). Their legitimation derives from the claim to represent an absolute truth, whether secular or religious, defined as the common interest of the governing and the governed. The ideology provides both the rationale for power and the framework for policy, leaving little room for political pluralism or dissent. Opposition is not merely suppressed but delegitimized as a threat to the overarching historical or spiritual mission. The fusion of state and ideology entails mass mobilization, indoctrination, and the subordination of legal systems, education, and media to the ideological project. Ideocratic regimes claim that they fulfill the laws of nature, history, or God and pave the way to a utopian future. What distinguishes ideocracies from all other political regime types is that the rulers not only claim a right to rule, but by virtue of their ideology also assert the

right to control and reshape all aspects of society. This regime type roughly encompasses what Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan categorized as totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism (Linz/Stepan 1996, p. 39), though contrasting Hannah Arendt's approach, the utopian ideology is the key feature while terror may be present or not (Arendt 1953). Communist, fascist, and Islamist regimes typically manifest as ideocracies.

Semi-ideocratic regimes, by contrast, employ ideology as the organizing framework but without totalizing ambition. Ideology structures authority and justifies rule, yet coexists with traditional, nationalist, or pragmatic elements that stabilize rather than transform the political order. These regimes do not assert comprehensive control over all spheres of social life. Their legitimation pattern rests on conservative principles—order, hierarchy, social harmony—rather than revolutionary transformation. The pattern constrains rather than absorbs institutional plurality. Right-wing corporatist and racist autocracies exemplify this semi-ideocratic form: ideology provides the blueprint for political authority without pursuing the comprehensive societal restructuring characteristic of full ideocracies.

The three ideocratic forms (communist, fascist, and Islamist) should be treated as distinctive types of political regimes (Linz 2000). If, however, a researcher wishes to analyze the broader family of ideology-centered autocracies, semi-ideocratic regimes may be included alongside full ideocracies. Researchers should distinguish between ideocracies and semi-ideocratic regimes when precision regarding the scope and transformative ambition of ideological legitimation is analytically relevant. The sections below provide detailed conceptualizations and operationalization criteria for each regime type within this family.

6.4.1. Communist Ideocracy

Conceptualization: Communist ideocracies structure authority through the institutional fusion of party, state, and ideology, claiming that Marxism-Leninism represents scientific truth about history. Legitimation does not rest on popular authorization but on ideological necessity: the ruling elite presents itself as the vanguard of the proletariat entrusted with guiding humanity toward a classless society. The party's right to rule derives from its role as interpreter of historical laws, making ideology the constitutive architecture of authority. Institutions, leadership selection, and policy direction are organized around doctrinal imperatives rather than pragmatic governance. As Giuseppe Di Palma observed, „the theory of history, not popular approval, constitute[s] the permanent core of communist claims to legitimacy” (Di Palma 1991: 50).

The institutional architecture reflects this legitimation logic directly. The communist party exercises vanguard authority and penetrates all branches of the state through parallel hierarchies. Party committees sit embedded within administrative, military, and judicial organs. The nomenklatura controls elite recruitment, ensuring that ideologically reliable cadres occupy all decisive positions. Party-state fusion does not require prior bureaucratic routinization or administratively stabilized parallel hierarchies. In revolutionary contexts, fusion may initially take the form of deliberate de-differentiation, in which party, state, and coercive power are hierarchically subordinated to a single ideological authority even when institutional forms remain fluid or improvised, a pattern extensively documented for the early Soviet Union and the early People's Republic of China (Fitzpatrick 1984; Schurmann 1968; Kotkin 1995). What is decisive is the assertion and enforcement of ideological sovereignty and unconditional party supremacy, not the maturity of administrative structures.

Central planning and state control of key sectors subordinate the economy to political and doctrinal objectives. These features constitute characteristic instruments of developed communist ideocracies and typically emerge through processes of consolidation rather than being fully present at the moment of revolutionary seizure of power (Kornai 1992, Nove 1969). Their absence in early post-revolutionary phases does not preclude ideocratic classification, as long as economic authority is normatively claimed by the party as part of its transformative doctrinal mission. Education, culture, and media serve as channels of indoctrination, promoting the formation of a new socialist human. Law and morality are redefined within ideological categories. Organized opposition is treated as counterrevolutionary hostility rather than legitimate dissent (Kołakowski 1978, Linz/Stepan 1996).

Elite composition and cohesion follow directly from this structure. Access to power depends on ideological loyalty and service within party hierarchies rather than kinship or personal patronage. Purges and rectification campaigns enforce doctrinal conformity and periodically recalibrate the inner-party balance. Cohesion is maintained through shared commitment to the revolutionary mission and subordination to collective discipline. Personality cults may arise, but they remain embedded within the party's ideological framework and justified through devotion to doctrine. The decisive boundary with Personalist Autocracy lies in institutional survivability: as long as party structures and Marxist-Leninist ideology organize succession and decision-making, the system remains ideocratic even under leaders with immense personal authority. Once party institutions lose autonomy and authority flows primarily through personal networks, the regime becomes personalist (Linz/Stepan 1996: 39, Kailitz 2013).

The boundary with One-Party Autocracy turns on legitimation logic rather than organizational monopoly. Both regime types restrict pluralism and concentrate power, but only communist ideocracies ground this monopoly in a comprehensive, teleological project to remake society according to historical materialism. One-party autocracies justify dominance pragmatically through national unity, stability, or developmental performance. Communist ideocracies justify it as historical necessity derived from the laws of historical development. The distinction lies in the operative grammar of legitimacy, not in institutional form.

Communist ideocracies typically evolve through distinct phases. The revolutionary or totalitarian phase is characterized by mass mobilization, ideological zeal, and coercive transformation of social structures. In post-totalitarian phases, the same doctrinal principles persist but become routinized through bureaucratic discipline and ritualized ideology. The regime remains ideocratic as long as Marxism-Leninism continues to structure authority, elite recruitment, and policy justification, even when partial market reforms or limited pluralism emerge (Arendt 1953, Backes/Kailitz 2016).

A regime qualifies as a Communist Ideocracy when three necessary conditions are jointly satisfied in practice. First, Marxism-Leninism or a derivative variant must function as the operative doctrine of governance. Party and state justify authority through reference to scientific socialism, class struggle, and a historical mission to build socialism on the path toward communism. Ideological education, cadre vetting, and doctrinal justification must form integral components of recruitment and policy formulation rather than mere rhetoric. Revolutionary movements may pursue socialist policies and align with Marxist-Leninist states without qualifying as communist ideocracies; classification requires the formal adoption of Marxism-Leninism as the operative doctrine (Kořakowski 1978).

Second, party-state fusion must be institutionalized in functional terms. The communist party must exercise and enforce unconditional supremacy over state institutions, the military, and the judiciary on doctrinal grounds. This condition is met whenever the party claims final authority over decision-making and treats state organs as instruments of ideological governance, regardless of whether control is exercised through routinized parallel hierarchies or revolutionary command structures, as documented for early communist regimes formed through revolutionary conquest (Fitzpatrick 1984, Schurmann 1968). The existence of satellite organizations or nominal secondary parties does not negate this criterion when such actors operate under binding party direction.

Third, the ambition of rule must be transformative and totalizing. Political authority must assert the right to reshape economic structures, social relations, and human consciousness according

to doctrinal principles. Command planning, collectivization, and ideological campaigns are typical expressions of this ambition, but the defining element is the claim to reorganize society in accordance with an all-encompassing Marxist-Leninist vision.

All three criteria are jointly necessary. Quantitative indicators from datasets such as V-Dem, Polity, or Freedom House may align with the expected absence of pluralism and concentration of power but serve only as background corroboration. Classification relies exclusively on the de facto legitimation structure.

When party monopoly persists but legitimation pivots away from Marxist-Leninist doctrine toward national unity, state-building, or performance-based claims, the regime is classified as a One-Party Autocracy. When ideological language persists but authority flows primarily through an individual ruler's personal network and succession becomes dynastic, the regime is classified as a Personalist Autocracy. When authority remains organized through military command structures without party supremacy justified by Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the regime is classified as a Military Autocracy.

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as a Communist Ideocracy when three necessary conditions are jointly satisfied in practice.

First, Marxism-Leninism or a derivative variant must function as the operative doctrine of governance. Party and state justify authority through reference to scientific socialism, class struggle, and a historical mission to build socialism on the path toward communism. Ideological education, cadre vetting, and doctrinal justification must form integral components of recruitment and policy formulation rather than mere rhetoric. Revolutionary movements may pursue socialist policies and align with Marxist-Leninist states without qualifying as communist ideocracies; classification requires the formal adoption of Marxism-Leninism as the operative doctrine (Kołakowski 1978).

Second, party-state fusion must be institutionalized. The communist party exercises supremacy over government and social organizations through embedded committees and a hierarchical nomenklatura. Parallel structures ensure that party organs guide and supervise all state institutions, the military, and the judiciary. The existence of satellite organizations or nominal secondary parties does not negate this criterion when they function under binding party direction. Revolutionary socialism alone, organized through military command structures, does not constitute communist ideocracy; the institutionalization of party supremacy over state organs is necessary.

Third, the ambition of rule must be transformative and totalizing. Political authority must assert the right to reshape economic structures, social relations, and human consciousness according

to doctrinal principles. Command planning, collectivization, and ideological campaigns illustrate this ambition, but the defining element is the claim to reorganize society according to an all-encompassing Marxist-Leninist vision.

These three criteria are jointly necessary and must all be met for classification. Quantitative indicators from datasets such as V-Dem, Polity, or Freedom House may align with the expected absence of pluralism and high state control but serve only as background corroboration. Classification relies exclusively on de facto legitimation structure.

When party monopoly persists but legitimation pivots to national unity, state-building, or performance without doctrinal centrality, the regime is a One-Party Autocracy. When ideological language persists but authority flows primarily through an individual ruler's personal network and succession is dynastic, the regime is a Personalist Autocracy. When authority remains organized through military command structures without institutionalized party supremacy, the regime is a Military Autocracy. Transitional or reform phases remain coded as ideocratic as long as Marxism-Leninism continues to define elite recruitment, organizational discipline, and the justificatory grammar of rule.

Examples: Paradigmatic Cases: The Soviet Union (1956-1985) exemplifies communist ideocracy in its most institutionalized form. Following Stalin's death, the CPSU established collective leadership and routinized party supremacy over all state organs. Marxism-Leninism served as the unquestioned basis of legitimacy, the nomenklatura system ensured ideological conformity of elites across all institutions, and central planning subordinated the economy to doctrinal objectives. The regime moderated coercion compared to the Stalinist period but maintained the transformative claim to build communism. Party congresses and Politburo deliberations organized succession and policy formation through institutional procedures rather than personal fiat. Opposition remained defined as ideological deviation. The post-Stalin USSR thus represents the canonical form of routinized communist ideocracy (Linz 2000, Kołakowski 1978).

The People's Republic of China (1949-1976) under Mao Zedong equally meets all criteria. The CCP established a hierarchical dual structure in which party organs directed state administration at every level. Maoist ideology interpreted Marxism-Leninism through continuous revolution and class struggle, legitimizing campaigns that sought to transform both economic production and human consciousness. The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution pursued total social transformation in accordance with doctrinal imperatives. Although Mao's personal authority was immense, party structures and ideology survived him, confirming the ideocratic rather than personalist nature of the regime (Linz/Stepan 1996, Schurmann 1968).

Poland (1945-1989) and the German Democratic Republic (1949-1989) represent imposed communist ideocracies. Both regimes were installed through Soviet occupation and remained dependent on Soviet military guarantees for survival, as demonstrated by their rapid collapse in 1989 when that support was withdrawn. Yet both fulfilled all three criteria throughout their existence: the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and the Socialist Unity Party (SED) established complete party-state fusion through embedded committees and nomenklatura systems, Marxism-Leninism functioned as operative doctrine in cadre training and policy justification, and both pursued transformative campaigns including collectivization and socialist industrialization. Elite recruitment was coordinated with Moscow, with many cadres trained in Soviet institutions, and ultimate authority in crisis situations rested with the Soviet leadership (as shown in 1956 and 1980-81 in Poland). These imposed variants demonstrate that external dependence does not alter the formal legitimation structure, though it shapes elite formation patterns and regime stability (Linz 2000).

Vietnam (1954-present) represents an enduring communist ideocracy that has survived market reforms. The regime maintains party supremacy through parallel structures, justifies authority through Marxist-Leninist ideology, and retains the transformative claim that socialism represents a necessary stage of historical development. Market liberalization did not replace doctrinal legitimation or party monopoly.

Just-inside Cases: Cuba represents a dual Just-inside case illustrating both temporal and structural thresholds. From 1959 to 1965, the revolutionary regime derived legitimacy from armed liberation and organized authority through military command structures, with Castro, Che Guevara, and Raúl Castro functioning as guerrilla commanders rather than party cadres. Despite socialist policies and alignment with the Soviet bloc after 1961, the absence of institutionalized party-state fusion meant the regime qualified as Military Autocracy. The 1965 founding of the Partido Comunista de Cuba marked the transition to Communist Ideocracy through formal adoption of Marxism-Leninism as operative doctrine and the establishment of party committees in state organs.

However, Cuba also illuminates the boundary with Personalist Autocracy. Fidel Castro's charismatic authority dominated all institutions, the PCC remained institutionally weaker than canonical communist parties like the CPSU, and the 2008 succession to Raúl Castro (Fidel's brother) contained quasi-dynastic elements. Personal networks centered on the Castro family occupied key positions, and major decisions often reflected Fidel's personal authority rather than collective party deliberation. Yet the regime remains ideocratic rather than personalist because party structures continued to organize succession, Marxist-Leninist doctrine remained the

formal basis of cadre recruitment and policy justification, and the system survived leadership transitions institutionally. The 2018 transition to Miguel Díaz-Canel, a non-Castro, confirmed that party mechanisms rather than pure personal networks structure authority. Cuba thus demonstrates that personal dominance and weak party institutionalization can coexist with communist ideocracy as long as the party retains organizational autonomy and continues to frame succession and elite recruitment through doctrinal categories. The threshold would be crossed if succession became explicitly hereditary within a single family or if party organs lost all deliberative function.

China since the early 1990s represents the key just-inside case in the opposite direction. The regime preserved the institutional core of CCP supremacy and the formal Marxist-Leninist framework, but ideological ambition has gradually become instrumental. Economic liberalization and technocratic modernization have replaced revolutionary mobilization. References to class struggle have given way to narratives of national rejuvenation and the „China Dream.” The reforms of the 1980s, like the Soviet Union’s New Economic Policy, remained ideocratically framed as tactical adaptation within socialist construction. The Just-inside phase begins when doctrinal commitment becomes secondary to economic performance and national prestige. Yet, as long as Marxism-Leninism remains codified as the party’s guiding ideology, cadre promotion continues to require formal ideological training, and policy justifications still reference the socialist stage of development, China remains a communist ideocracy. Observable shifts indicating transition to One-Party Autocracy would include the removal of Marxism-Leninism from party statutes, the substitution of ideological education with purely technocratic or nationalist training, and the abandonment of the CCP’s claim to serve as a Leninist vanguard organization.

The Soviet Union under Stalin (1929-1953) constitutes a Just-inside case toward Personalist Autocracy. Stalin developed an extreme personality cult that exceeded typical communist ideocratic patterns. The Great Purges decimated party cadres and institutional autonomy, concentrating decision-making in Stalin’s person. Succession mechanisms were unclear, and terror reached into the highest party organs. However, the regime remained ideocratic rather than personalist because party structures and Marxist-Leninist ideology continued to organize authority and survived Stalin’s death. The 1953 succession occurred through party mechanisms (Politburo deliberation), not through dynastic transfer or pure personal designation. The nomenklatura system, though terrorized, continued to function as the recruitment framework. Legitimation remained grounded in doctrinal claims about building socialism rather than in Stalin’s personal charisma alone. The regime’s institutional resilience after Stalin’s death, with

party organs reasserting collective authority, confirms its ideocratic classification. The threshold to Personalist Autocracy would have been crossed if Stalin had established dynastic succession or if party institutions had lost all independent organizational capacity.

Yugoslavia (1945-1991) constitutes a decentralized Just-inside case. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia legitimized its rule through a Marxist vision of workers' self-management as the authentic socialist path. Federal and republican institutions operated under party supervision, and ideological education remained central to elite recruitment. Although the regime moderated coercion and tolerated limited autonomy, its claim to embody the historical mission of socialism and its party-state fusion kept it within the ideocratic category (Linz 2000).

Just-outside Cases: North Korea demonstrates a temporal transition from Communist Ideocracy to Personalist Autocracy. From 1948 to 1993, the regime operated as a communist ideocracy: the Workers' Party of Korea organized state and social life through a Marxist-Leninist framework adapted as Juche, which was officially described as a creative national version of Marxism-Leninism. Party institutions exercised genuine organizational authority, and legitimacy rested on claims of socialist construction. After 1994, with Kim Il Sung's death and Kim Jong Il's succession, Juche evolved into an explicitly hereditary doctrine centered on the leader's lineage rather than on Marxist-Leninist historical laws. Authority became dynastic and personal rather than ideological. The party lost institutional autonomy, functioning as an instrument of the Kim family rather than as an independent vanguard organization. Succession became purely hereditary (Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un in 2011). From 1994 onward, the regime transformed into a personalist autocracy, fulfilling neither the doctrinal criterion nor the institutional autonomy condition.

Algeria under the FLN (1962-1989) and Tanzania under the CCM (1965-1992) illustrate the opposite boundary with One-Party Autocracy. Both established party monopolies and pursued state-led development, but legitimacy rested on national unity and modernization rather than an all-encompassing doctrine of historical transformation. Neither regime adopted Marxism-Leninism as operative doctrine, established systematic ideological vetting of cadres, or claimed to reorganize society according to scientific socialism. Their authority structures lack the doctrinal organizing principle and totalizing transformative ambition of communist ideocracy. They thus fall under One-Party Autocracy despite single-party rule and socialist policy orientations.

6.4.2. Right-Wing Autocracy

Conceptualization: Right-Wing autocracy legitimates authority through anti-egalitarian hierarchical principles that reject both liberal democratic procedures and egalitarian transformation. This legitimation pattern structures authority around the claim that individuals or groups possess inherently different capacities and rights, requiring political order based on natural, functional, racial, or national hierarchies. Elite recruitment flows from ideological conformity to these hierarchical principles, distinguishing right-wing autocracy from personalist autocracy where patronage networks dominate. The institutional architecture enforces hierarchy through legal codification, corporatist integration, or revolutionary mobilization.

Within this shared legitimation pattern, three subtypes emerge based on ideological foundation and transformative ambition. These subtypes are not mutually exclusive categories but rather analytical dimensions that can coexist within single regimes, with classification determined by which dimension most comprehensively defines the regime's legitimation pattern. Fascist autocracies pursue totalizing societal transformation through ultranationalist revolution, permanent mass mobilization, and creation of a new man, exhibiting ideocratic character comparable to communist regimes but directed toward hierarchical ends. These regimes seek comprehensive penetration of all social spheres through party organizations, subordinating traditional institutions to the totalizing project. Fascist ideology glorifies the state, war, and national regeneration as transformative forces, requiring active participation rather than passive subordination. Corporatist autocracies structure authority around conservative principles of hierarchical social harmony, functional group organization, and anti-communism, seeking to preserve rather than revolutionize hierarchical order. Corporatist ideology structures authority and elite organization but coexists with traditional elements, especially the Catholic Church, without seeking comprehensive societal penetration. Citizens are integrated into state-controlled syndicates without requiring ideological enthusiasm. Racist autocracies ground authority in doctrines of racial hierarchy and segregation, organizing state institutions and legal frameworks around racial dominance as the primary organizing principle. While comprehensive in legal codification, racist autocracy does not seek totalizing ideological penetration or permanent mobilization. The goal is conservative: maintaining racial hierarchies perceived as natural rather than creating new racial orders through revolutionary transformation. Racist autocracies typically emerge from settler colonial contexts where demographically substantial settler populations transition from external imperial sovereignty to independent statehood while constructing legal-ideological justifications for racial hierarchy.

Regimes frequently combine multiple dimensions. Nazi Germany exhibited both fascist revolutionary-transformative ambition and comprehensive racist legal codification; Fascist Italy

combined ultranationalist mobilization with corporatist institutional structures; Francoist Spain employed corporatist mechanisms alongside elements of fascist rhetoric. Classification follows a hierarchy of analytical precedence: revolutionary-transformative ambition and totalizing penetration (fascist dimension) takes precedence when present, as ideocracy represents the most comprehensive form of ideological structuring. When revolutionary transformation is absent, classification depends on whether racial hierarchy functions as the constitutive principle through citizenship redefinition (racist dimension) or whether functional group integration structures authority without racial ordering (corporatist dimension). This hierarchy reflects degrees of ideological comprehensiveness rather than mutual exclusivity (Costa Pinto 2014, Costa Pinto 2017, Payne 1980).

Racist autocracy must be distinguished from electoral oligarchical autocracy with race-based suffrage restrictions. The decisive criterion is whether racial hierarchy constitutes the state's foundational organizing principle or serves as an instrumental restriction within an electoral legitimation pattern. In racist autocracy, racial ideology redefines citizenship and territory itself through legal mechanisms that assign different racial groups to separate political entities, such as apartheid South Africa's Bantustan system which denationalized Black South Africans by designating them citizens of nominally independent homelands. The dominant racial group constitutes itself as the state, with subordinated groups defined as external to the polity. In electoral oligarchical autocracy, exclusion operates within a shared framework of citizenship, with suffrage restrictions maintaining elite power rather than restructuring the fundamental nature of statehood. Elections in racist autocracies, when present, organize authority within the dominant racial group, not as the regime's legitimation pattern toward the entire population.

Right-wing autocracy must be distinguished from additional adjacent regime types. Personalist autocracies structure authority through personal patronage networks, whereas right-wing autocracies employ ideological legitimation patterns that structure elite recruitment independently of personal ties. Military autocracies rest on military power bases with limited ideological institutionalization, whereas right-wing autocracies demonstrate elaborated ideological legitimation structures extending beyond military command hierarchies. Communist autocracies, like fascist autocracies, are ideocracies with revolutionary-transformative ambitions, but pursue egalitarian class transformation versus hierarchical national or racial regeneration. The transition from direct rule colonial regime to racist autocracy marks a critical threshold: when settler populations establish independent sovereignty while maintaining legal racial hierarchies, authority shifts from external imperial control to internal ideological legitimation. Colonial

regimes derive authority from external imperial sovereignty; racist autocracies claim internal ideological sovereignty based on racial ordering maintained by settler populations.

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as Right-Wing Autocracy when it meets both necessary conditions and demonstrates institutional enforcement of hierarchical ordering. The necessary conditions include rejection of competitive democracy and political pluralism as legitimating principles, anti-egalitarian ideology asserting inherent hierarchies among groups, and elite recruitment structured by ideological criteria rather than primarily through personal loyalty networks. To distinguish ideological from personalist legitimation, coders assess whether ideology structures elite recruitment measurably or serves merely as rhetoric for personal rule. Indicators of genuine ideological structuring include institutionalized party or movement organizations with authority independent of personal ties, systematic inclusion or exclusion criteria based on ideological principles, and persistence of ideological institutions across leadership transitions.

Institutional enforcement of hierarchical ordering must be demonstrated through at least one of three mechanisms, which are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within regimes. Fascist mechanisms involve party-organizational penetration through compulsory mass organizations, permanent mobilization structures requiring active participation, and totalizing ideological institutions aimed at comprehensive societal transformation. Corporatist mechanisms involve functional group integration through state-controlled syndicates and hierarchical organization of labor and professional associations without totalizing penetration. Racist mechanisms involve legal codification of racial classifications systematically embedded in law and administration, territorial and citizenship redefinition along racial lines such as creation of separate homelands or denationalization of subordinated groups, and institutionalized spatial segregation that restructures the polity itself rather than merely restricting participation within it. The decisive criterion distinguishing racist autocracy from electoral oligarchical autocracy with racial suffrage restrictions is whether racial hierarchy redefines the fundamental nature of statehood and citizenship or serves as an instrumental method for elite exclusion within an existing polity.

Just-inside cases require careful assessment of whether right-wing ideology genuinely structures authority or serves as rhetorical cover for other legitimation patterns. Regimes with right-wing rhetoric but primarily personalist power structures classify as Personalist Autocracies unless ideological institutions demonstrably structure elite recruitment independently of personal loyalty networks. The critical test is whether institutional positions confer authority independent of personal ties, whether ideological criteria systematically govern recruitment, and whether

structures persist beyond individual leadership. Vargas's Estado Novo in Brazil exemplifies this boundary: despite corporatist rhetoric and syndical structures, authority rested on personal patronage networks. Nationalist military regimes without elaborated ideological frameworks typically classify as Military Autocracies. The decisive criterion is whether ideology has been institutionalized beyond military command structures to structure civilian authority and elite recruitment. Metaxas-era Greece demonstrates this threshold: corporatist symbolism and nationalist ideology existed, but authority derived primarily from military backing rather than elaborated ideological structures structuring civilian elite recruitment independently. Regimes under foreign occupation with collaborationist right-wing governments classify as Occupied Regimes despite right-wing ideological elements, because external control constitutes the primary basis of authority.

For subtype assignment when regimes exhibit multiple dimensions, coders apply this decision sequence based on analytical precedence. If the regime exhibits revolutionary-transformative ambition deriving legitimation from fascist or national-socialist ideology seeking to create a new man and comprehensively transform society through permanent coerced mass mobilization and totalizing penetration of all social spheres, classify as Fascist Autocracy regardless of whether corporatist or racist mechanisms are also present. Revolutionary-transformative ambition takes precedence because ideocracy represents the most comprehensive form of ideological structuring. If revolutionary transformation is absent but the regime employs comprehensive racial laws as its constitutive organizing principle, with racial classification and segregation systematically embedded in law and administration, and particularly if citizenship itself is redefined along racial lines through mechanisms like separate homelands, classify as Racist Autocracy. If neither revolutionary transformation nor racial citizenship redefinition dominates, but the regime maintains conservative hierarchical ordering through state-controlled functional integration guided by corporatist ideology emphasizing social harmony, traditionalist principles, and anti-communism while coexisting with traditional institutions, classify as Corporatist Autocracy.

This hierarchy reflects analytical precedence rather than mutual exclusivity. Nazi Germany combined fascist revolutionary mobilization with comprehensive racist legal codification, but classifies as Fascist Autocracy because totalizing revolutionary ambition most comprehensively defined its legitimation pattern. Fascist Italy combined ultranationalist mobilization with extensive corporatist structures, but fascist ideology's revolutionary goals and permanent mobilization take precedence over corporatist institutional mechanisms. Apartheid South Africa employed some corporatist elements in organizing white political and economic life, but racial

citizenship redefinition through the Bantustan system most comprehensively defined the regime's legitimation pattern, warranting Racist Autocracy classification.

Examples: The following cases exemplify Right-Wing Autocracy in its three principal analytical dimensions, demonstrating how anti-egalitarian hierarchical legitimation patterns structure authority across different institutional configurations, ideological foundations, and transformative ambitions. Because these dimensions are not mutually exclusive, many regimes exhibit characteristics of multiple dimensions, with classification determined by which dimension most comprehensively defines the legitimation pattern.

Fascist Autocracy

Paradigmatic Cases: Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 represents Right-Wing Autocracy where the fascist dimension most comprehensively defines the legitimation pattern, despite also exhibiting extensive racist mechanisms. The regime rejected both liberal democracy and egalitarian principles, grounding authority in ultranationalist racial ideology that asserted hierarchical ordering among peoples. The fascist ideocratic character manifests in the regime's totalizing ambition to create a new man and comprehensively transform German society. Political opposition was eliminated through Gleichschaltung, all institutions were subordinated to Nazi party control, and society was penetrated by party organizations requiring active participation including Hitler Youth, German Labor Front, and NS Women's League. Unlike semi-ideocratic right-wing forms that preserve traditional structures, Nazi ideology sought to subordinate the Church, transform regional identities, and create a racially purified Volksgemeinschaft through revolutionary means. State policies aimed at racial transformation through systematic exclusion and genocide, culminating in the Holocaust. Permanent mass mobilization through rallies, demonstrations, and organizational membership was constitutive of the regime's legitimation pattern. Violence and war were glorified as purifying and regenerative forces essential to national rebirth. While the regime also systematically codified racial hierarchy through Nuremberg Laws and comprehensive segregation, classification as Fascist Autocracy reflects that revolutionary-transformative ambition and totalizing penetration most comprehensively structured the regime's authority (Payne 1980, Paxton 2005).

Fascist Italy from 1925 to 1943 represents Right-Wing Autocracy where fascist and corporatist dimensions coexisted, with fascist revolutionary ambition taking analytical precedence. The regime established a one-party state rooted in ultranationalism, anti-liberalism, and glorification of violence. Mussolini's fascism combined totalitarian ambition with extensive corporatist institutional structures, organizing labor and professional associations into state-controlled corporations and establishing the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations. However, the

revolutionary ultranationalist ideology, permanent mobilization requirements through party organizations and youth movements, and comprehensive penetration goals demonstrate fascist ideocratic character taking precedence over corporatist institutional mechanisms. The regime sought transformation of Italian society through creation of a disciplined, militarized populace devoted to state greatness and imperial expansion, not merely preservation of hierarchical order. Classification as Fascist Autocracy reflects that revolutionary mobilization and transformative ambition most comprehensively defined legitimation, even as corporatist structures provided institutional architecture (Payne 1980, Costa Pinto 2014, Costa Pinto 2017).

Just-inside Cases. The Metaxas regime in Greece from 1936 to 1941 shows the threshold between Military Autocracy and Fascist Right-Wing Autocracy. General Metaxas established dictatorship with fascist-influenced rhetoric including corporatist symbolism and the Third Hellenic Civilization ideology combining nationalism, anti-communism, and traditionalism. However, ideological institutionalization remained limited. Authority derived primarily from military backing and personal rule rather than from elaborated party-organizational structures that structured elite recruitment independently. Corporatist institutions were more symbolic than substantive, and the regime lacked the permanent mobilization structures or comprehensive institutional penetration characteristic of ideocratic forms. This represents a Just-inside case leaning toward Military Autocracy due to the primacy of military power base over ideological institutionalization.

Just-outside Cases. Chile under Pinochet from 1973 to 1990 illustrates a regime just outside the Fascist Autocracy threshold. The regime employed anti-communist crusade rhetoric, DINA secret police apparatus, and personality cult elements resembling fascist forms. However, the regime lacked fascist ideology's revolutionary mass mobilization and transformative ambition. Authority derived primarily from military command structures rather than from party-organizational penetration of society. The absence of permanent mobilization structures requiring active participation and the regime's conservative rather than revolutionary orientation warrant classification as Military Autocracy despite fascist stylistic elements. This demonstrates how military power base without ideological institutionalization places a regime outside fascist classification, even when employing fascist rhetoric and repressive apparatus.

Corporatist Autocracy

Paradigmatic Cases: Francoist Spain from 1939 to 1975 exemplifies Right-Wing Autocracy where the corporatist dimension most comprehensively defines the legitimation pattern, despite incorporating elements of fascist rhetoric and symbolism. The regime rejected liberal democracy and egalitarianism, grounding authority in Catholic traditionalism, functional hierarchy,

and anti-communism. The corporatist semi-ideocratic character manifests in the regime's goal to preserve rather than transform Spanish society. Labor and professional organizations were integrated into state-controlled vertical syndicates eliminating independent representation while maintaining hierarchical order. Unlike fascist regimes' permanent mobilization and comprehensive penetration, Francoist corporatism coexisted with traditional institutions. The Catholic Church retained significant autonomy and served as a pillar of the regime. Regional identities, family structures, and traditional social hierarchies were preserved rather than revolutionized. The regime relied on passive subordination through institutional control and repression rather than requiring ideological enthusiasm or active participation. While the regime employed Falangist symbolism and rhetoric from fascist sources, the absence of revolutionary-transformative ambition and permanent mobilization structures means corporatist functional integration most comprehensively defined legitimation. Legitimacy rested on notions of organic national unity, social harmony, and defense of traditional Catholic values against communist and liberal threats.

Portugal under Salazar from 1933 to 1968 similarly institutionalized corporatist Right-wing Autocracy through the Estado Novo. Salazar promoted an authoritarian vision embedding corporatist structures into the political system through the National Union and organized corporate representation. Trade unions were banned, strikes outlawed, and all civil society organizations brought under state control through vertical integration. The regime's legitimacy derived from Catholic social doctrine, hierarchical nationalism, and anti-communist ideology rather than revolutionary mobilization or totalizing penetration. Traditional institutions, especially the Church and rural social structures, were preserved and integrated into the authoritarian framework. The regime exemplifies corporatist autocracy in its conservative form, seeking social order through functional hierarchy and passive subordination without revolutionary transformation (Schmitter 1975).

Just-inside Cases: Vargas's Estado Novo in Brazil from 1937 to 1945 demonstrates the boundary between Right-Wing Corporatist and Personalist Autocracy. The regime employed corporatist rhetoric and institutions including a labor code modeled on Italian fascism and syndical structures. However, authority fundamentally rested on Vargas's personal patronage networks and coalitional management. Corporatist ideology served instrumental purposes for personal rule rather than structuring elite recruitment independently. Access to power and resources depended on personal loyalty to Vargas and incorporation into his clientelistic networks, not on ideological criteria or institutional position within corporatist structures. The regime's policies

were shaped by Vargas's strategic calculations and patronage imperatives rather than by corporatist doctrine, warranting classification as Personalist Autocracy.

Racist Autocracy

Paradigmatic Cases: Apartheid South Africa from 1948 to 1994 represents Right-wing Autocracy where the racist dimension most comprehensively defines the legitimation pattern, despite employing some corporatist mechanisms in organizing white political and economic life. The racist semi-ideocratic character is evident in comprehensive legal entrenchment of racial dominance combined with conservative rather than revolutionary ambition. The regime's legitimacy rested on the doctrine of separate development, asserting that distinct racial groups possessed inherently different capacities requiring separate political and social structures under white dominance. Apartheid laws systematically codified racial classification through the Population Registration Act, restricted movement and residence through the Group Areas Act, prohibited interracial marriage through the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, and excluded the Black majority from political representation through constitutional provisions and pass laws. All major institutions including education, healthcare, urban planning, and labor markets were structured around racial segregation embedded in legal and administrative frameworks. The regime's racist character manifested most fundamentally in the Bantustan system, which legally redefined Black South Africans as citizens of nominally independent homelands, stripping them of South African citizenship and restructuring the state's territorial foundations to constitute whites as the sole legitimate polity (Fredrickson 1981). This citizenship redefinition distinguishes racist autocracy from electoral oligarchical forms that restrict suffrage within a shared framework of citizenship. Unlike fascist regimes' totalizing mobilization, apartheid relied on segmented control through legal segregation and spatial separation. While corporatist mechanisms organized some aspects of white labor and professional life, racial citizenship redefinition most comprehensively defined the regime's legitimation pattern. The regime sought to maintain rather than revolutionize racial hierarchies, coexisting with traditional institutions and social structures within the white community. The regime emerged from a settler colonial context where a demographically substantial white population, roughly twenty percent at apartheid's height, transitioned from British colonial administration to independent sovereignty while constructing elaborate legal-ideological justifications for racial hierarchy (Marx 1998).

Just-inside Cases: Rhodesia from 1965 to 1979 demonstrates the threshold conditions for racist autocracy classification. The regime instituted constitutional provisions excluding ninety-five percent of the population via property and education qualifications alongside Land Tenure Act legislation codifying spatial segregation. Racial hierarchy was legally codified and

structured political authority. However, several factors place Rhodesia at the lower threshold of racist autocracy. The settler population was smaller, roughly five percent, providing a narrower demographic base for independent sovereignty claims. The regime faced ongoing counterinsurgency requiring external support, revealing fragility in its claim to constitute stable independent authority. The unilateral declaration of independence lacked international recognition, maintaining ambiguity about whether the regime constituted genuinely independent sovereignty or remained under contested external authority. Institutional elaboration was less comprehensive than apartheid South Africa, with segregation laws less systematically embedded across all administrative and social institutions, and without the comprehensive citizenship redefinition represented by the Bantustan system. These characteristics demonstrate Just-inside status illustrating how demographic scale of settler populations, international recognition of sovereignty, comprehensiveness of legal codification, and depth of institutional penetration determine classification thresholds (Cell 1982).

Just-outside Cases: German Southwest Africa from 1894 to 1915 illustrates a regime just outside the Racist Autocracy threshold despite implementing racist policies including genocide against Herero and Nama peoples. The regime maintained comprehensive racial hierarchy through legal segregation, forced labor systems, and systematic exclusion of indigenous populations from political participation. However, authority derived from external imperial sovereignty of the German Empire rather than from internal ideological sovereignty claimed by a settler population. Colonial administrators and settlers operated under imperial mandate from Berlin, with the Kaiser and Reichstag retaining ultimate authority over colonial policy. The regime lacked the independent statehood and internal sovereignty characteristic of racist autocracy. Classification as Direct Rule Colonial Regime remains warranted because external imperial control constituted the primary basis of authority, despite the presence of racist ideology and policies. This demonstrates how the source of sovereignty—external imperial versus internal ideological—constitutes the decisive criterion distinguishing colonial regimes from racist autocracies, even when both maintain comprehensive racial hierarchies (Cell 1982).

The United States from 1890 to 1965 in Southern states represents an Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy just outside the Racist Autocracy threshold. Southern states maintained Jim Crow laws and systematic Black disenfranchisement through poll taxes, literacy tests, and violence. However, this represented suffrage restriction within a shared, if systematically violated, framework of formal citizenship rather than ideological redefinition of statehood itself. Black Americans remained legally citizens of the United States with constitutional rights that were denied in practice through state-level restrictions and extra-legal violence, but the federal regime did

not territorially redefine citizenship by assigning Black populations to separate political entities or stripping them of national citizenship. The legitimation pattern of the broader American regime remained electoral, with racial exclusion in Southern states serving as instrumental mechanism for white elite power maintenance within the federal structure. This contrasts with apartheid South Africa's Bantustan system, which legally redefined Black South Africans as citizens of separate homelands, fundamentally restructuring the state's territorial and citizenship foundations along racial ideology (Fredrickson 1981). This demonstrates how citizenship redefinition versus suffrage restriction constitutes the decisive boundary between racist autocracy and electoral oligarchical autocracy with race-based restrictions.

6.4.3. Islamist Ideocracy

Conceptualization: Islamist ideocracies structure political authority through the fusion of religious doctrine and state institutions under the claim that legitimate rule must conform to divine law. Their legitimation pattern rests on the conviction that sovereignty belongs to God rather than to the people, and that rulers merely implement His commands through the state. Political authority is thus derived from and constrained by Islamic revelation and jurisprudence rather than popular will or secular law. The regime claims to represent a divinely mandated moral order that encompasses all aspects of life, political, social, and personal, and thereby asserts the right to reshape society in accordance with its interpretation of Islam. This fusion of religion and governance distinguishes Islamist ideocracies from religiously conservative autocracies, which rely on clerical legitimacy without seeking total ideological transformation, and from secular ideocracies such as communism, which rest on non-religious teleological doctrines.

Islamist ideocracy represents a specific form of theocracy characterized by transformative ambition. While theocracy broadly refers to political systems where religious authorities exercise governmental power, not all theocracies are ideocratic. Traditional theocracies, such as Tibet under the Dalai Lama system or the Vatican, fuse religious and political authority but primarily preserve established religious orders rather than pursuing revolutionary social transformation. These systems derive legitimacy from religious tradition and hierarchical authority but lack the totalizing project to comprehensively reshape society according to an ideological interpretation of divine law. Islamist ideocracies, by contrast, mobilize religious doctrine as a revolutionary instrument for comprehensive social engineering. They do not merely preserve Islamic tradition but actively reconstruct social relations, legal systems, economic structures, and cultural practices according to their interpretation of how Islamic principles should organize modern life.

This transformative character distinguishes ideocratic from traditional theocratic governance and aligns Islamist ideocracies with other ideocratic regime types such as communist regimes, which similarly pursue totalizing societal transformation, albeit through secular rather than religious doctrine.

In these regimes, ideology constitutes the architecture of rule rather than its ornamentation. The state functions as the instrument for realizing God's law (Sharia), which simultaneously defines legal codes, moral obligations, and political authority. The leadership claims legitimacy through religious knowledge and doctrinal purity, often institutionalized in clerical hierarchies or councils of scholars charged with interpreting and enforcing divine law. The boundary between political and theological authority collapses: religious institutions define legitimacy, and state institutions execute their rulings.

This structure shapes both institutional design and elite composition. Clerical or theological authority becomes the primary pathway to power. The legal system is either formally or substantively subordinated to Sharia; religious courts exercise jurisdiction over civil, criminal, and family law; and legislation inconsistent with divine law is either invalid or subject to clerical review. Educational, media, and cultural institutions are employed for doctrinal indoctrination and moral policing. The regime claims not only to govern society but to sanctify it by aligning human law with divine revelation (Esposito 1998, Tibi 2007).

The boundary with One-Party Autocracy lies in the source and structure of legitimation. One-party regimes claim to embody the unified will of the nation; Islamist ideocracies claim to embody the divine will. The distinction from Religious Autocracy lies in the totalizing ambition of the ideological project: religious autocracies preserve tradition, whereas Islamist ideocracies mobilize divine law to reconstruct society. The contrast with Personalist Autocracy lies in institutional anchoring: personalist regimes center on individual charisma, family, or coercion, whereas Islamist ideocracies organize authority around doctrinal authority and theocratic institutions. The boundary with Autocratic Monarchy turns on the basis of succession and ultimate authority: monarchies derive legitimacy from dynastic continuity and hereditary succession, while ideocracies derive legitimacy from clerical interpretation of divine law, with leadership positions determined by religious credentials rather than bloodline (Roy 1994).

Islamist ideocracy is empirically rare but conceptually and analytically indispensable. Only two regimes have sustained this pattern for extended periods: Iran since 1979 and Afghanistan under Taliban rule. This scarcity reflects substantial structural obstacles to establishing and maintaining clerical supremacy in modern states. Sunni Islam's decentralized authority structure, lacking hierarchical clerical institutions comparable to Shi'a marja systems, creates particular

challenges for establishing theocratic governance. Most Islamist movements either fail to seize power, govern through military or personalist structures with Islamic legitimation rather than genuine ideocratic institutions, or face international pressures that prevent consolidation.

However, the conceptual significance of this regime type far exceeds its empirical frequency. Islamist ideocracy represents the explicit goal of numerous influential political movements across the Muslim world. The Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates across Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine have consistently articulated visions of Islamic governance. Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ennahda in Tunisia, various Salafi movements, Al-Qaeda affiliates, and the Islamic State's attempted caliphate (2014-2017) all share the aspiration to establish regimes where divine sovereignty supersedes popular sovereignty and Sharia becomes the comprehensive organizing principle of state and society. The pattern provides essential analytical purchase for understanding regime contestation, opposition strategies, and potential transitions in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (Kepel 2002, Roy 2017).

The forward-looking significance of this category parallels the early history of communist ideocracy. In 1920, only the Soviet Union embodied this regime type. Had scholars dismissed it as empirically insignificant, they would have missed the most consequential regime innovation of the twentieth century. Communist ideocracy subsequently proliferated across Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and parts of Africa, reshaping global politics for decades. Similarly, failed or partial attempts at establishing Islamist ideocracies—Egypt's brief Muslim Brotherhood government (2012-2013), ISIS's short-lived caliphate, the Islamic Courts Union in Somalia (2006), and ongoing civil conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen—underscore both the appeal of this model among certain movements and the formidable obstacles to its realization. The rarity of successfully consolidated cases does not diminish the category's utility; rather, understanding why transformative religious governance remains aspirational despite its prominence in political discourse is itself analytically crucial. The category enables systematic analysis of regime contestation, the structural conditions that facilitate or prevent ideocratic consolidation, and the trajectories of Islamist movements when they do achieve power.

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as an Islamist Ideocracy when three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions are met.

First, the regime's legitimation explicitly asserts divine sovereignty (*hakimiyyat Allah*) as the foundation of authority. Rulers and institutions claim that sovereignty belongs to God and that their legitimacy derives from implementing divine law. This differs from regimes that invoke Islamic identity alongside nationalist, dynastic, or developmental claims. The assertion must be

constitutive rather than ornamental: divine sovereignty must organize the institutional architecture of rule, not merely provide rhetorical justification (Ayubi 1991).

Second, Islamic law (Sharia) serves as the operative legal and policy framework. Religious scholars or councils of jurists hold binding interpretive authority over legislation, and state institutions are hierarchically subordinated to theological oversight. The enforcement of Sharia is institutionalized through religious courts, morality police, or ministries charged with enjoining virtue and forbidding vice. This criterion distinguishes regimes where Sharia is formally codified but remains subordinate to secular authority (as in Pakistan under Zia or Sudan under al-Bashir after 1999) from those where religious law genuinely constrains state action.

Third, the regime demonstrates transformative ambition: it seeks to reshape social relations, education, culture, and public morality according to Islamic principles. The regime claims the right and duty to transform society through a comprehensive ideological project based on religious revelation. This totalizing ambition distinguishes ideocracies from conservative religious monarchies that preserve traditional orders or military regimes that instrumentally deploy Islamic rhetoric without pursuing comprehensive social engineering.

These criteria are jointly necessary for classification. Regimes where Islamic references coexist with secular or pragmatic justifications without institutionalized doctrinal supremacy are not ideocratic. Likewise, regimes in which divine authority becomes symbolic while real power resides in personal or military networks fall outside this category. Just-inside cases typically involve either temporal thresholds (when does a revolutionary movement consolidate into stable ideocracy?) or the coexistence of electoral and ideocratic legitimation patterns within a single regime.

Quantitative indicators such as low pluralism or high religious control may corroborate qualitative assessments, but classification relies exclusively on de facto legitimation structures and ideological function. The decisive question is not whether a regime invokes Islam or implements elements of Sharia, but whether divine sovereignty functions as the constitutive organizing principle of political authority, whether clerical institutions exercise genuine veto power over state action, and whether the regime pursues comprehensive societal transformation according to religious doctrine.

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases: Iran (1979–present) is the paradigmatic Islamist ideocracy. The Islamic Republic's doctrine of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist) establishes that sovereignty belongs to God and is exercised through the Supreme Leader, a Shi'a cleric with ultimate religious and political authority. All state institutions, including the presidency, parliament, and

judiciary, are constitutionally subordinate to this clerical office. The Guardian Council, composed of clerics and jurists, vets legislation and candidates for conformity with Islamic law. Elections occur within strict ideological boundaries, and all policy domains remain under clerical supervision. Sharia informs both civil and criminal codes, the education system enforces doctrinal conformity, and public morality is regulated by state institutions such as the morality police. This system fuses divine authority and state power in a comprehensive theocratic framework. The revolutionary period (1979-1982) involved intense mobilization and the violent consolidation of clerical supremacy, while subsequent decades have seen the routinization of theocratic governance through bureaucratic institutions, though the underlying legitimization pattern and institutional structure remain unchanged (Arjomand 1988, Arjomand 2009, Schirazi 1997).

Afghanistan under Taliban rule (1996–2001; 2021–present) represents a Sunni variant. The Taliban regime rejects democratic sovereignty and legitimizes authority solely through Deobandi interpretations of Islam. Political power derives from religious command, and law is equated with Sharia as interpreted by Taliban clerics. The ulema councils and religious police govern public morality, education, and media. The Taliban's comprehensive attempt to enforce religious doctrine in all spheres of life—gender relations, dress codes, cultural expression, and education—illustrates the regime's totalizing ideological ambition. The two periods of Taliban rule differ in degree: the first (1996-2001) pursued maximalist enforcement with international isolation, while the second (2021-present) shows somewhat more pragmatic accommodation to international pressure, particularly regarding female education in some contexts. However, both periods share the foundational commitment to divine sovereignty, systematic Sharia enforcement, and transformative ambition, thereby fulfilling the defining features of an Islamist ideocracy (Maley 2021, Rashid 2000).

Just-inside Case: Iran represents a critical Just-inside case in relation to Electoral Autocracy. While the regime clearly fulfills all three criteria for Islamist ideocracy, it conducts regular competitive elections for president and parliament with genuine contestation between reformist and conservative factions within the system. Electoral outcomes have real policy consequences, turnout varies meaningfully, and voter mobilization shapes governance. The 1997 election of reformist Mohammad Khatami, the 2005 election of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the 2013 election of moderate Hassan Rouhani each marked significant policy shifts. However, the Guardian Council vets all candidates for ideological conformity, excluding those deemed insufficiently committed to the Islamic Republic's principles. This creates a system analogous to

satellite party arrangements in communist regimes, where multiple parties compete but within boundaries defined by a supreme ideological authority.

The decisive question is whether legitimation derives primarily from divine sovereignty implemented through clerical supremacy (ideocratic pattern) or from managed electoral authorization (electoral autocratic pattern). As long as the Supreme Leader retains ultimate authority through Velayat-e Faqih doctrine, unelected clerics hold veto power over legislation, and elections function within boundaries defined by divine law rather than popular sovereignty, the regime remains an Islamist ideocracy. The electoral elements enhance regime legitimacy and create space for policy contestation but do not supersede theocratic foundations. Observable shifts toward Electoral Autocracy would include the Guardian Council's transformation into a ceremonial body without genuine veto power, elections determining ultimate authority rather than operating within clerical constraints, or the Supreme Leader position becoming symbolic rather than exercising decisive power over foreign policy, military affairs, and constitutional interpretation (Buchta 2000, Moslem 2002).

Just-outside Cases: Gaza under Hamas (2007–present) illustrates incomplete ideocratic institutionalization. Hamas invokes Islamist ideology and claims Sharia governance, yet religious law coexists with secular administrative frameworks inherited from the Palestinian Authority. Sharia courts function within a plural legal system without comprehensive jurisdiction. Ideological enforcement is selective, applied more stringently to public morality than to economic or administrative spheres. Many state functions operate through pragmatic factional mechanisms rather than clerical oversight. Hamas thus represents Islamist-influenced authoritarianism rather than full ideocracy, demonstrating that partial Islamization and ideological rhetoric do not constitute systematic theocratic governance (Hroub 2006).

Sudan (1989–2019) under Omar al-Bashir demonstrates military autocracy with Islamic legitimation. From 1989 to 1996, Hassan al-Turabi's National Islamic Front provided ideological direction, Sharia was comprehensively codified, and education was restructured around Islamic principles. However, ultimate authority remained with the military. The decisive 1999 test revealed this: al-Bashir dissolved parliament, marginalized Turabi, and unilaterally weakened Islamic institutions without systemic collapse. In genuine ideocracy, clerical structures exercise institutional veto power that survives leadership purges. Sudan demonstrates that systematic Islamization under military auspices does not constitute ideocracy when clerical institutions lack autonomy to constrain executive action (Burr/Collins 2003, Gallab 2008).

Pakistan under General Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988) represents military autocracy with ideological coloration. Zia introduced Federal Sharia Courts, Hudood Ordinances, and religious education

reforms, yet sovereignty remained vested in the military. Islamic doctrine justified rather than constrained military authority. Religious scholars validated executive decisions without independent institutional power. The absence of clerical supremacy and comprehensive transformation prevents ideocratic classification, demonstrating that even systematic implementation of Islamic law does not constitute ideocracy when operating under military authority (Nasr 2001).

Saudi Arabia and Gulf monarchies rest on dynastic legitimation reinforced by religious endorsement. The Saudi monarchy claims guardianship of holy places and enforces conservative norms but derives authority from hereditary succession, not divine sovereignty implemented through clerical governance. The ulema validate the regime but do not rule, lacking independent power to veto royal decisions. Religious law legitimates rather than limits monarchical power. These cases demonstrate that extensive Sharia implementation and clerical influence do not constitute ideocracy without transformative ambition, clerical institutional supremacy exercising genuine constraints on executive authority, and totalizing ideological project (Al-Rasheed 2010, Herb 1999).

Tibet under the Dalai Lama system (prior to 1950) exemplifies traditional theocracy without ideocratic transformation. Religious and political authority fused through the institution of the Dalai Lama as both spiritual leader and head of state, identified through reincarnation and recognized through Buddhist hierarchical procedures. Monastic institutions exercised substantial political influence, and Buddhist principles informed governance. However, the system preserved rather than revolutionized social orders, maintained traditional hierarchies rather than engineering new ones, and grounded authority in spiritual succession rather than activist reinterpretation of divine commands demanding comprehensive societal change. Va-PoReg classifies such regimes as Autocratic Monarchy when succession operates through recognized procedures (including religious identification systems like reincarnation) and authority derives from traditional religious legitimation rather than transformative ideological projects. The contrast demonstrates that religious rule alone does not constitute ideocracy; the decisive criterion is whether religious doctrine serves as blueprint for totalizing transformation or primarily legitimizes traditional authority structures (Goldstein 1989).

6.5. Regimes Based on Institutional Legitimation

Regimes grouped under this heading structure authority through organizational hierarchies in which legitimacy derives from institutional office and hierarchical rank rather than from

personal attributes, electoral mandates, or ideological orthodoxy. This institutional legitimation pattern prescribes that the right to rule stems from membership in and position within an established organizational framework, whether military command chains or single-party structures. A defining feature shared across both variants is the claim to monistic authority: these regimes assert that their organization alone possesses the capacity and legitimacy to govern, rendering political pluralism unnecessary or harmful. Authority is exercised through hierarchical institutions that present themselves as embodying the collective wisdom or unified will necessary for effective governance, rejecting the premise that legitimate authority requires competitive procedures or ideological transformation. The pattern describes how authority is structured through institutional mechanisms and collective organizational identities, irrespective of whether these institutions genuinely function as collective bodies or concentrate power in practice. This distinguishes institutional regimes from those structured around personalist legitimation (where authority inheres in specific individuals), electoral legitimation (where authority derives from competitive procedures), or ideology-centered legitimation (where authority is primarily justified through doctrinal frameworks).

Within this shared monistic foundation, regimes differ in the source and nature of their institutional claims to exclusive authority. Military autocracies derive legitimacy from the armed forces as an institution, grounding their monistic claim in technocratic and security expertise. These regimes justify rule through narratives of national crisis and assert that only the military possesses the organizational discipline, hierarchical command structure, and apolitical rationality necessary to restore order where civilian governance has failed. Authority is organized through military command hierarchies, with the officer corps functioning as a collective decision-making body distributed according to rank rather than concentrated in a single ruler. Military regimes typically frame their monopoly on power as temporary guardianship responding to extraordinary circumstances, though this temporality claim often proves false in practice. One-party autocracies structure authority through party organizations, grounding their monistic claim in political representation of a unified popular will. Operating under a doctrine of monist popular sovereignty, these regimes assert that the party embodies the common interest of the people, making competitive pluralism divisive rather than necessary. Unlike ideocracies, one-party autocracies do not pursue comprehensive societal transformation according to utopian visions but maintain power through party structures that monopolize access to political office and organize society vertically through party cells. In both variants, legitimacy is claimed to reside in the organization as a collective entity possessing unique capacity to govern,

distinguishing these regimes from personalist autocracies where organizational structures are subordinated to individual rulers.

6.5.1. One-Party Autocracy

Conceptualization: One-party autocracies structure authority through party-organizational monopoly justified by claims of monist popular sovereignty. The ruling party claims to embody the unified will of the nation or people, rendering political pluralism fundamentally illegitimate. Authority flows through party structures that monopolize access to political power, penetrate state institutions, and control elite recruitment through membership requirements and internal hierarchies.

The institutional architecture distinguishes one-party autocracies from adjacent regime types. Unlike ideocracies, these regimes do not pursue utopian societal transformation guided by comprehensive doctrine. The party monopoly serves to maintain political control and facilitate development rather than to implement systematic ideological restructuring of society, economy, and consciousness. Unlike corporatist autocracies, authority does not flow through organized occupational intermediation structures. Unlike racist autocracies, the regime does not rest on legal racial hierarchies. The party monopoly itself constitutes the primary organizational logic. Ideological content varies substantially across one-party autocracies without constituting different legitimation patterns. Some articulate nationalist-developmental rhetoric (Kenya under KANU), others employ socialist-inflected unity discourse (Tanzania under CCM, Algeria under FLN), still others invoke pan-Arab or pan-African solidarity. These ideological formulations function as legitimating narratives for party monopoly rather than as comprehensive doctrines requiring total societal control. Post-colonial developmentalism provides common context where party monopoly is justified as necessary for national unity, state-building, and economic modernization (Zolberg 1985: 64-87).

Party institutionalization exists on a spectrum with implications for boundary maintenance with personalist autocracy. Strongly institutionalized variants feature autonomous party organs that make substantive decisions, control elite advancement, and possess organizational capacity independent of individual leaders (Tanzania under Nyerere). Party structures could survive leadership transitions and succession occurs through party processes. Weakly institutionalized variants shade toward personalism, where party structures become increasingly nominal (Malawi under Banda). The boundary with personalist autocracy is crossed when party organs lose all autonomous capacity and authority flows entirely through personal loyalty networks.

Elite composition is shaped by party membership requirements functioning as gatekeeping mechanisms. Access to state positions and economic opportunities flows through party affiliation. Cohesion mechanisms include party discipline enforced through internal organs, patronage networks routed through party hierarchies, and shared commitment to maintaining party supremacy. In strongly institutionalized variants, elite circulation occurs through party organs operating according to institutional procedures; in weakly institutionalized variants, personal networks increasingly supplant formal structures even as party affiliation remains formally necessary (Brownlee 2007: 45-67).

Operationalization: A regime qualifies as one-party autocracy when it satisfies four cumulative criteria. First, it must not meet criteria for ideocracy, lacking a utopian transformation agenda requiring comprehensive restructuring according to systematic doctrine. Second, de facto single-party monopoly must exist through either legal prohibition of opposition parties or complete suppression rendering opposition entirely ineffective. The decisive indicator is whether opposition parties possess any meaningful capacity to organize, compete for power, or access institutional authority. Legal existence of opposition parties without such capacity does not preclude one-party classification when parties function purely as controlled satellites.

Third, party structures must retain at least minimal autonomous capacity distinguishing the regime from personalist autocracy. Party organs must participate in decision-making beyond merely ratifying individual leader preferences, control at least some aspects of elite recruitment beyond personal networks, and maintain organizational coherence that could theoretically persist without the current leader. When party structures become purely nominal facades with all authority flowing through personal loyalty networks, classify as personalist autocracy. Fourth, authority must not be structured primarily through corporatist intermediation or racial legal hierarchies, indicating corporatist or racist autocracy respectively.

V-Dem indicators provide quantitative guidance. Variable v2psparban (party ban) with scores of 0 or 1 indicates opposition parties are banned or severely restricted. Variable v2psbars (barriers to parties) with scores of 3 or 4 indicates significant obstacles to party formation. Cross-reference v2x_partipdem (participatory component index), where low scores suggest minimal autonomous organization outside the ruling party. To assess party institutionalization versus personalism, examine v2xlg_legcon (legislative constraints on executive) and v2psoppaut (opposition party autonomy): very low scores on both combined with single-party dominance suggest weak institutionalization approaching personalist threshold.

The boundary with electoral autocracies requires attention. Electoral autocracies maintain multi-party systems and ground legitimation in electoral dominance, preserving pluralist

fiction. One-party autocracies either legally prohibit opposition or suppress it so completely that no multi-party framework exists, grounding legitimation in monist claims that party embodies the nation. Syria in 1990 represents a Just-inside case: the National Progressive Front included multiple parties functioning purely as Ba'ath satellites. Code as one-party autocracy when satellite parties are entirely controlled appendages lacking independent decision-making. Post-1990 Uzbekistan, where multiple pro-government parties exist with minimal but non-zero independence, codes as electoral autocracy because the legitimation structure maintains pluralist forms.

The boundary with personalist autocracy hinges on party institutionalization assessment. When party organs retain capacity to make decisions beyond leader ratification, control elite recruitment through institutional criteria supplementing personal networks, or maintain organizational coherence independent of the leader, classify as one-party autocracy. When party structures are purely nominal and all decisions flow from personal networks, classify as personalist autocracy. Diagnostic indicators include: Can party organs theoretically constrain the leader? Does elite advancement require party endorsement beyond personal loyalty? Could the party survive leader removal? Negative answers suggest personalist classification (Bratton/van de Walle 1997: 61-96).

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases

Tanzania under CCM (1965-1992) exemplifies strongly institutionalized one-party autocracy with socialist-developmental coloring. The 1965 Interim Constitution established TANU (merged with Zanzibar ASP in 1977 to form Chama Cha Mapinduzi) as sole legal party. Party structures deeply penetrated state institutions through systematic cadre placement, with CCM cells organized in villages, workplaces, and state agencies. The party exercised oversight over government ministries, and advancement in state bureaucracy required party membership and approval from party organs including the National Executive Committee.

Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa ideology framed party rule as embodying national unity for African socialist development. However, this remained distinct from communist ideocracy: villagization programs were coercive but did not constitute systematic transformation of consciousness characteristic of Maoist collectivization. Economic control remained incomplete with informal sectors persisting, and civil society retained partial autonomy. Party organs maintained institutional capacity distinct from Nyerere personally, enabling orderly succession to Ali Hassan Mwinyi in 1985 and eventual multi-party transition in 1992 through party-managed processes (Bienen 1970, Hyden 1980).

Kenya under KANU (1982-1991) represents moderate institutionalization with nationalist-developmental legitimation. The 1982 constitutional amendment formalized KANU's (Kenya African National Union) legal monopoly following an attempted coup. President Daniel arap Moi's „Nyayo philosophy“ articulated generic unity discourse emphasizing stability and national cohesion without specific socialist content, justifying party monopoly through claims that multi-party competition would exacerbate ethnic divisions.

KANU structures organized through district and branch networks, controlled parliamentary nominations through party primaries, and structured access to state resources. However, Moi increasingly consolidated personal control through patronage distribution and strategic use of ethnic networks. By the late 1980s, KANU functioned more as vehicle for presidential authority than autonomous institution, though it retained sufficient organizational capacity to distinguish the regime from pure personalism. Intra-party elections for parliamentary seats continued, providing limited competition within the monopoly framework (Widner 1992, Throup/Hornsby 1998).

Just-inside Cases

Malawi under MCP (1966-1994) illuminates the boundary with personalist autocracy. The 1966 constitution established Malawi Congress Party as sole legal party under Hastings Kamuzu Banda's presidency-for-life. While party organs formally existed with district committees and national executive, these were heavily subordinated to Banda's personal authority. MCP structures functioned primarily as mobilization instruments serving Banda's rule rather than autonomous decision-making bodies.

All significant political decisions flowed through Banda's personal networks rather than party deliberation. Cabinet ministers served at presidential pleasure with frequent arbitrary dismissals, and party positions were distributed through personal loyalty. The regime maintained minimal party institutionalization in early decades sufficient for one-party classification, but this eroded substantially over time. By the 1980s, MCP structures were so thoroughly personalized that the regime approached the personalist threshold. The diagnostic test clarifies: Could MCP function without Banda? The answer shifted from „minimally“ in the 1970s to „no“ by the 1980s. Lack of institutional succession mechanisms was revealed when democratization pressure led to rapid regime collapse (Kaspin 1995).

Guinea under PDG (1958-1984) shows progressive degradation from one-party to personalist rule. The Parti Démocratique de Guinée was established as sole party following independence, with Sékou Touré's radical anti-colonial stance providing initial legitimation. Party structures initially featured institutional robustness with local committees and mass mobilization

distinguishing Guinea from purely personalist rule. However, progressive personalization through paranoid purges and Touré's cult degraded party institutionalization substantially by the 1970s. Party structures increasingly served surveillance functions rather than autonomous decision-making. By the late 1970s, Guinea approached the personalist threshold. The regime's complete collapse following Touré's death in 1984 with immediate military coup revealed absence of institutional succession mechanisms, validating Just-inside classification that shifted toward personalism over time.

Just-outside Cases: Turkmenistan under Niyazov (1990-2006) contrasts as personalist autocracy masquerading as one-party rule. While the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan was sole legal party, it possessed zero autonomous capacity. All authority flowed through Saparmurat Niyazov's personal cult of „Turkmenbashi,” with party structures serving purely as administrative appendages. Unlike Tanzania where CCM organs retained capacity to deliberate and make institutional decisions, Turkmenistan's party structures were hollow shells. No party congress exercised real authority, no central committee constrained presidential decisions, and party membership meant nothing beyond formal affiliation. Elite recruitment occurred through personal loyalty networks rather than party channels. The regime's extreme personalization was manifest in renaming months after Niyazov and erecting personality cult monuments. The absence of institutional succession mechanisms was evident in chaotic transition following Niyazov's death in 2006.

Post-1990 Uzbekistan under Karimov and successors contrasts as electoral autocracy maintaining multi-party façade. The 1992 constitution established multi-party system with five parties currently in parliament: Liberal Democratic Party, People's Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party „Adolat,” Democratic Party „Milliy Tiklanish,” and Ecological Party. While all parties are effectively pro-government and opposition severely repressed, the regime maintains pluralist forms rather than asserting explicit single-party monopoly. This differs from Syria's National Progressive Front where satellite parties were formally subordinated to Ba'ath Party in defined hierarchy. Uzbekistan's parties nominally compete in elections, maintain separate organizational identities, and are not constitutionally designated as satellites. The legitimization structure preserves fiction of multi-party democracy and grounds authority in electoral dominance rather than monist party-nation unity claims (McGlinchey 2011).

China under CCP contrasts as communist ideocracy through comprehensive Marxist-Leninist transformation agenda. While both China and Tanzania feature single-party monopoly, the Chinese Communist Party pursues systematic ideological transformation across all societal domains through nomenclatura systems, thought reform campaigns, and comprehensive economic

planning. CCP legitimation rests not merely on embodying national unity but on implementing communist ideology to transform Chinese society according to Marxist historical materialism. Party-state fusion operates through elaborate cadre systems penetrating every institution, with party committees exercising authority parallel to and superior to state structures at all levels. This differs qualitatively from Tanzania's limited Ujamaa programs or Kenya's generic unity discourse. CCP organizational penetration and ideological ambitions mark it as ideocracy rather than pragmatic party monopoly (Schurmann 1968).

6.4.2. Military Autocracy

Conceptualization: Military autocracy constitutes a distinct legitimation pattern based on institutionalized guardianship, where the military as a corporate body claims sovereign authority based on its unique capacity to resolve national crises and protect essential state interests. This pattern presents the armed forces not merely as state instruments but as the ultimate repository of national sovereignty during periods of perceived existential threat, civilian institutional failure, or political paralysis (Finer 2002, Stepan 1971). The military frames its intervention as a necessary assumption of power to rescue the nation from imminent collapse, employing what Nordlinger terms the „guardian syndrome“ where officers believe themselves uniquely qualified to define and protect national interests (Nordlinger 1977).

The institutional architecture centers on the formalization of military command structures as the primary apparatus of state authority, systematically oriented toward permanent rule. The military embeds itself durably within the state by creating organs largely decoupled from civilian control and integrating military command hierarchies into core state apparatuses. Decision-making flows through established military hierarchies, with sovereign power vested in corporate bodies rather than individual rulers. Elite recruitment in military autocracies draws primarily from the professional officer corps, with command positions filled through military rank and seniority rather than personal loyalty networks, distinguishing these regimes from personalist autocracies where clientelist networks structured around the ruler determine elite composition. Empirically, military autocracies are established through coups d'état, with no modern cases emerging through alternative pathways. This observed regularity reflects how military corporate authority typically supplants civilian governance. Critically, however, classification depends on the resulting legitimation pattern and authority structure, not on the seizure event itself, ensuring that the regime type remains analytically distinct from its mode of origin.

The critical boundary with personalist autocracy lies in institutional preservation versus subordination. Military autocracies maintain the military as a corporate institution, while personalist regimes subordinate military structures to the ruler's personal network. The boundary with ideocracy is defined by the primacy of legitimation principles: where ideological sovereignty systematically structures authority claims and party organs derive legitimacy from doctrinal frameworks that override military guardianship claims, the regime qualifies as ideocracy regardless of military prominence or officer leadership. The boundary with non-electoral transitional autocracy, elaborated below, hinges on legitimation patterns distinguishing substantive guardianship from procedural facilitation.

Operationalization: Before applying classification criteria, regimes already classified as monarchy or ideocracy at higher levels of the Va-PoReg taxonomy are excluded from military autocracy consideration. This ensures hierarchical consistency: ideological sovereignty (ideocracy) and dynastic legitimation (monarchy) override military guardianship claims when present. Classification proceeds by testing: (1) executive domination by military institution, (2) sovereign authority vested in military corporate structures, while ensuring exclusion criteria for genuinely competitive presidential elections are satisfied (Ezrow/Frantz 2011: 166, Geddes/Frantz/Wright 2014, Linz 2000: 172)

Executive domination by military institution requires the effective head of state or government to be a current or former military officer whose authority derives from position within military hierarchies. Assessment focuses on de facto control: civilian puppet presidents do not alter classification if the military retains effective executive control.

Sovereign authority vested in military corporate structures requires the military to function as the primary locus of decision-making through structures designed for permanent governance. Observable evidence includes: executive decisions requiring military council approval; military command channels for policy formulation; key portfolios (defense, interior, intelligence) held by active-duty military officers; military budgets determined through military institutional channels without legislative oversight; military courts exercising jurisdiction over civilians; and absence of operational mechanisms for transferring power to civilian authorities. The maintenance of formal military hierarchies for decision-making, rather than informal personal networks, distinguishes military from personalist rule. V-Dem's Military Influence Index (v2x_mi) typically registers values above 0.7 for military autocracies, though qualitative assessment of institutional structures takes precedence over quantitative thresholds.

Boundary with Non-Electoral Transitional Autocracy: The decisive criterion is the legitimation pattern. Military autocracy employs guardianship claims invoking crisis and military necessity,

while transitional autocracy uses exclusively caretaker rhetoric. When mixed legitimation occurs, guardianship prevails as it asserts sovereign authority rather than procedural facilitation. Caretaker legitimation is inherently self-limiting, claiming temporary facilitation of transition, whereas guardianship legitimation justifies open-ended authority based on ongoing crisis. Observable indicators include official statements, constitutional preambles, and decree language. A regime designating itself as „transitional“ while eschewing crisis rhetoric may qualify as transitional autocracy, but guardianship claims mandate military autocracy classification regardless of announced transitions. Guardianship language typically invokes existential threats, civilian incapacity, or national salvation imperatives.

Boundary with Personalist Autocracy: The decisive criterion is institutional preservation versus subordination. Observable indicators of military institutional preservation include: functioning military councils where decisions require collective approval; regular officer consultation through established hierarchies; professional promotion criteria based on seniority and merit rather than personal loyalty; and absence of familial appointments to command positions. Transition to personalist autocracy occurs when military structures are dismantled in favor of personal networks, irregular promotions concentrate power among loyalists, or dynastic succession planning emerges.

Boundary with Ideocracy: The decisive criterion is the primacy of authority structures. Where party organs systematically control military appointments through ideological vetting, party commissars embedded in military units hold veto power over operational decisions, and doctrinal conformity determines promotion over military merit, the regime qualifies as ideocracy. Military autocracy requires that command hierarchies operate with relative autonomy from party or ideological supervision, even when officers may hold party membership.

Boundary with Electoral Autocracy: The decisive criterion is whether military corporate structures or electoral institutions constitute the primary locus of sovereign authority. Military autocracy is maintained even when regular elections are held if constitutional provisions grant the military autonomous veto power over executive decisions, military councils function as the primary decision-making bodies with elected officials subordinate to military institutional authority, or succession depends fundamentally on military institutional designation rather than electoral cycles. Elections in such cases serve legitimation purposes for international recognition but do not structure how power is organized internally. Conversely, electoral autocracy classification is warranted when sovereignty formally vests in elected offices without military institutional override, even if former military officers dominate government through civilian positions and elections are systematically manipulated. The test is whether authority derives

from military command structures or from electoral-administrative roles: former generals governing as elected presidents indicate electoral autocracy; active officers or former officers backed by military corporate veto authority indicate military autocracy. Observable indicators distinguishing military from electoral autocracy include whether executive decisions require military council approval or flow through elected offices; whether cabinet formation reflects military command hierarchies or electoral party structures; whether succession planning centers on military institutional designation or electoral calendar cycles; and whether constitutional frameworks vest sovereignty in military corporate bodies with autonomous intervention authority or in electoral institutions without military veto power.

Examples

Paradigmatic Cases: Chile under military rule (1973-1990) exemplifies institutionalized military rule. Following the September 1973 coup, sovereign authority vested in a four-member junta comprising commanders of the army, navy, air force, and national police. The junta operated through collective decision-making requiring unanimous approval for constitutional reforms and majority vote for policy decisions, demonstrating corporate military authority rather than personal rule (Loveman 1991). Executive decisions flowed through military command channels: cabinet ministers reported to the junta, key portfolios remained under military control throughout the regime, and the 1980 constitution formalized military guardianship by granting the armed forces autonomous authority to „guarantee the institutional order.“ Professional military hierarchies governed promotions within the officer corps, with regular rotation among senior commanders maintaining institutional character. The regime's legitimation discourse consistently invoked existential crisis and military necessity to rescue Chile from Marxist threat, exemplifying guardianship claims.

Uruguay under military rule (1973-1985) demonstrates that civilian figureheads do not alter classification when military juntas retain effective control. President Juan María Bordaberry remained nominally in office until 1976, but the military Council of Generals held supreme authority, approving all major policy decisions and ultimately dismissing Bordaberry when he deviated from military directives. Subsequent civilian presidents operated under direct military supervision, illustrating the primacy of de facto authority over formal titles (Linz 2000: 162-164).

Just-inside Cases: Myanmar under military rule (1988-2011) illustrates the personalist boundary, maintaining military dominance while approaching personalization thresholds. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) initially functioned as collective military rule with senior commanders sharing power. Over time, Senior General Than Shwe concentrated

authority through manipulated promotions favoring loyalists, irregular retirement of potential rivals, and family members placed in economically strategic positions. However, the regime retained formal military council structures, continued to conduct business through military chain of command, and never established dynastic succession mechanisms, keeping it within military autocracy classification despite personalization pressures (Callahan 2003: 214-221). Egypt under military supervision (February-June 2012) demonstrates mixed legitimation where guardianship claims override transitional rhetoric. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) designated itself a transitional authority organizing elections, yet simultaneously issued Constitutional Declaration No. 1 (02/13/2011) asserting military authority to „protect the revolution“ and „safeguard national interests,“ classic guardianship language. When SCAF dissolved the elected parliament unilaterally (06/14/2012) and issued supplemental constitutional declarations restricting presidential powers, these actions revealed substantive sovereign claims rather than procedural facilitation, confirming military autocracy classification despite concurrent electoral processes (Brownlee/Masoud/Reynolds 2015: 94-108).

Just-outside Cases: Poland under General Jaruzelski (1981-1989) illustrates ideocratic dominance despite military leadership. While Jaruzelski held top military and party positions, the communist party maintained systematic control over military structures through embedded mechanisms: the Main Political Administration of the Polish People's Army functioned as a party organ within the military hierarchy, political officers (politruks) at battalion level and above held veto power over operational decisions, and officer promotions required party approval through nomenklatura system. Party cells operated throughout military units, and ideological conformity assessments determined career advancement. This institutional architecture meant party structures systematically overrode military command autonomy, satisfying ideocracy rather than military autocracy criteria despite martial law and Jaruzelski's general's uniform (Kemp-Welch 2008, Perlmutter 1981).

Uganda under Amin (1971-1979) shows personalist transformation through systematic dismantling of military corporate structures. Amin initially ruled through military institutions inherited from Obote, but rapidly purged the officer corps of potential rivals, eliminated collective military councils, staffed command positions with ethnic loyalists from his home region, and created parallel security forces (State Research Bureau, Public Safety Unit) answerable directly to him rather than military hierarchy. By 1973, professional military promotion criteria had collapsed in favor of personal loyalty tests, and military budgets flowed through Amin's personal control. This dismantling of institutional structures marked transition to personalist autocracy (Kasozi 1994: 84-89).

Pakistan under Musharraf (1999-2008) demonstrates the transition threshold where personalization replaced military institutional governance. Following the 1999 coup, Musharraf initially governed through military councils maintaining institutional character. The 2002 referendum declaring him president for five years, creation of the National Security Council dominated by military figures but operating outside military command structure, and the 2007 constitutional crisis where Musharraf dismissed judges while in civilian presidential role rather than through military authority all marked departures from military institutional rule. Political manipulation and plebiscitary legitimation supplemented military authority. While personalization pressures mounted, military institutional structures remained sufficiently intact to classify the regime as military autocracy approaching the personalist threshold (Haqqani 2005: 301-305).

Egypt from 2015 onwards illustrates military autocracy maintained through constitutional veto mechanisms despite regular elections. Following the 2013 military intervention, elections resumed in 2015 with former General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi elected president. The 2019 constitutional amendments, however, granted the Egyptian Armed Forces explicit authority to intervene in governance and veto civilian executive decisions, institutionalizing military corporate authority above elected offices. Key portfolios (defense, interior, intelligence) remain monopolized by military officers, and the armed forces control substantial economic sectors through autonomous institutional channels. While elections occur regularly and opposition parties legally exist, the constitutional vesting of sovereign authority in military corporate structures with autonomous veto power indicates military autocracy classification despite the electoral façade. Decision-making flows through military institutional backing rather than electoral mandates, and succession depends fundamentally on military designation even when ratified through predetermined elections. Presidential elections in 2014 (96.9% for Sisi), 2018 (97.1%), and 2024 (89.6%) featured no viable opposition, systematic candidate disqualification, and predetermined outcomes reflecting military institutional control rather than electoral authorization (Abul-Magd 2017). Thailand from 2014 to 2019 demonstrates similar dynamics where military corporate structures retained constitutional supremacy despite holding elections in 2019. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) junta that seized power in May 2014 maintained direct governance through military command channels until 2019 elections, but the 2017 constitution granted military-appointed bodies institutionalized control independent of electoral outcomes. The fully appointed 250-member Senate received constitutional authority to participate in prime ministerial selection alongside the 500-member elected House of Representatives, ensuring military veto power over government formation. Additionally, the constitution mandated a 20-year National Strategy designed during military rule that bound future elected

governments, and established mechanisms allowing unelected bodies to intervene in governance on national security grounds. This constitutional architecture ensured military corporate authority transcended electoral cycles, distinguishing the regime from electoral autocracy where elections structure authority even when manipulated. The 2019 elections, conducted under these constraints, produced a military-aligned government led by coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha transitioning from junta head to elected prime minister, illustrating how constitutional military veto authority maintains military autocracy classification despite electoral procedures.

6.6. Regimes Based on External Legitimation

Regimes grouped under this heading derive their authority from foreign powers rather than from the governed population or any domestic source of legitimation. The defining feature of this external legitimation pattern is the fundamental separation between rulers and ruled across sovereign boundaries: those who govern belong to a different political community than those who are governed, and authority is structured to be accountable to the foreign power rather than to the local population. This creates a distinctive form of political domination characterized in its purest form by exploitation without representation. The colonial or occupying power extracts resources, imposes taxes, conscripts labor, and enforces laws upon the governed population while systematically denying that population meaningful political participation, representation in decision-making processes, or the rights and protections extended to citizens of the ruling power. This structural exclusion is not an aberration but a constitutive feature of external legitimation: the governed are subjects of foreign rule rather than citizens of a shared polity, and their systematic exploitation without corresponding political voice is justified through doctrines of civilizational hierarchy, developmental guardianship, security imperatives, or legal frameworks that distinguish between metropolitan citizens and colonial subjects or occupied populations. This legitimation pattern operates fundamentally differently from all forms of domestic legitimation. In electoral regimes, authority derives from procedures that at least claim to reflect the will of the governed population. In personalist and institutional regimes, rulers and ruled belong to the same political community, however unequal the power distribution. In ideology-centered regimes, the doctrine claims to serve the interests of the governed population, however falsely. In externally legitimated regimes, by contrast, authority explicitly serves the interests of a foreign power, and the governed population's consent or interests are neither necessary nor relevant to the regime's legitimation claims. The colonial or occupying power answers to its own metropolitan government, not to the governed territory. This creates a unique

accountability structure in which rulers are institutionally oriented toward external rather than internal constituencies, making policies designed to benefit the foreign power through resource extraction, strategic positioning, or geopolitical objectives rather than the welfare of the governed population. Some colonial powers claim to rule for the benefit of the colonized population through civilizing missions, developmental guardianship, or liberation narratives, presenting foreign domination as beneficial tutelage or temporary protection. Other colonial and occupation regimes make no such claims, openly pursuing exploitation and strategic interests. However, regardless of whether benevolent intentions are claimed, the fundamental structure remains unchanged: political authority derives from and is accountable to the foreign power rather than to the governed population, and the colonized or occupied population lacks the political voice to determine whether foreign rule serves their interests or to withdraw consent from governance they experience as exploitative or oppressive. Within this pattern, regimes differ in the claimed permanence of foreign control and the nature of justification for external rule. Colonial regimes are structured as permanent systems of foreign domination designed to indefinitely maintain control over territories for purposes of economic exploitation, resource extraction, and strategic advantage. The colonial power denies sovereignty to the colonized territory and structures governance through laws and practices that institutionalize the subordinate status of the indigenous population. Colonial rule operates through legitimation claims rooted in civilizational hierarchy (the colonizer as more advanced), developmental guardianship (colonial rule as preparation for eventual self-governance), or imperial mandate (the right to rule derived from conquest or treaty with other imperial powers rather than from the governed). Occupation regimes present themselves as temporary arrangements justified by security imperatives, conflict resolution, or international mandates. The occupying power claims authority through narratives of restoring order, preventing violence, or executing internationally sanctioned missions, framing foreign control as extraordinary measures responding to specific crises. External authority may operate under various legal frameworks and labels, including international mandates such as League of Nations mandates or United Nations administrations. Classification as colonial or occupation regime depends on the substantive structure of authority—specifically, whether the foreign power exercises control over domestic policy formulation and execution—rather than on formal labels or diplomatic designations. Arrangements framed as international mandates are coded as colonial regimes when they exhibit permanent control structures and comprehensive administrative domination over internal affairs, or as occupation regimes when they present themselves as temporary responses to crises. Entities that retain genuine domestic sovereignty over internal governance while delegating foreign policy and defense to an external power fall

outside the external legitimation pattern and are classified as semi-sovereign rather than as colonial or occupation regimes. Despite differing temporal claims and justifications, both colonial and occupation regimes share the fundamental characteristic that political authority derives from external sovereignty, is structured to serve external interests, and operates through systematic control over domestic policy without accountability or representation for the governed population. Both may operate through direct rule, where the foreign power governs through its own officials and exercises comprehensive control over all policy domains, representing pure external legitimation, or through indirect rule, in which the local population elects a parliament with genuine, though circumscribed, legislative authority over defined spheres of domestic governance. Indirect rule introduces a hybrid legitimation structure: while ultimate sovereignty and accountability remain vested in the foreign power (external legitimation), the elected indigenous parliament derives its authority from domestic electoral procedures within its circumscribed spheres (internal legitimation component). This creates a gradient from pure external legitimation (direct rule) toward arrangements incorporating limited domestic legitimation (indirect rule), though regimes remain classified as externally legitimated as long as the foreign power retains ultimate sovereignty and control over core policy domains.

6.6.1. Colonial Regime

Conceptualization: Colonial regimes constitute the permanent variant of external legitimation, designed to maintain foreign control over territory and population on an indefinite basis. They differ from occupation regimes, which organize external authority as a temporary response to crisis, because colonial regimes embed foreign dominance in durable institutional structures that serve the economic, strategic, and political interests of the metropolitan power. The defining feature that unites all colonial arrangements is the permanent subordination of the colonized territory to external sovereignty. Ultimate authority over fundamental questions of governance, foreign affairs, and resource allocation resides with the metropolitan government, and all institutional structures within the colony are shaped by this external accountability. This shared foundation also includes a characteristic elite architecture in which metropolitan officials occupy the apex of authority, while indigenous elites play either subordinated administrative roles under direct rule or exercise circumscribed domain-specific authority under indirect rule. These structural arrangements ensure that authority flows upward to the metropole rather than downward to the governed population, creating a coherent family of regimes defined by external legitimation patterns rather than by formal labels or constitutional terminology.

Protectorate terminology historically used by colonial powers (such as German *Schutzgebiet* or French *protectorat*) reflects diplomatic or legal vocabulary rather than substantive governance. Many entities formally described as protectorates operated under comprehensive metropolitan control over domestic governance and therefore qualify as colonial regimes despite their designation. German territories such as *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Namibia) and *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Tanzania) functioned as full colonial regimes despite their formal labels, because the German Reich exercised complete authority over internal governance. In contrast, entities that retained genuine domestic sovereignty over internal affairs while delegating only foreign policy and defense to an external authority constitute semi-sovereign arrangements rather than colonial regimes. The classification therefore follows *de facto* authority structures rather than diplomatic nomenclature.

Within this overarching pattern of external legitimation, colonial regimes vary along a single decisive dimension: the presence or absence of a domestic legitimation component alongside the primary external sovereignty structure. Direct rule exemplifies the pure form of external legitimation. The metropolitan power governs through its own officials, and indigenous institutions possess no independent authority over any domain of domestic governance. All significant decisions are made by administrators accountable exclusively to the metropole. No legislative or policy-making capacity is vested in indigenous populations, and no authority flows from domestic constituencies. Indirect rule introduces a hybrid legitimation structure within the same overarching external framework. Indigenous institutions, whether elected parliaments or traditional authorities with genuine pre-colonial legitimacy, exercise genuine but circumscribed authority over specific spheres of domestic policy, deriving their standing from domestic sources of legitimacy rather than from colonial appointment. This internal component does not challenge the primacy of external sovereignty, because the metropolitan power retains authority over core domains, including foreign affairs, defense, ultimate constitutional design, and typically some central economic policy areas, along with veto capacity over indigenous decisions. Direct and indirect rule are therefore mutually exclusive variants of colonial governance: the former rests entirely on metropolitan authorization, the latter combines external sovereignty with a secondary internal legitimation source that remains structurally subordinate.

The inclusion of traditional authorities as potential legitimation sources in indirect rule arrangements reflects historical diversity in colonial governance strategies. British colonial practice in territories such as Northern Nigeria, Uganda, and Basutoland (Lesotho) explicitly incorporated indigenous traditional rulers who exercised genuine authority over specified domains—including local administration, customary law, and taxation—based on pre-colonial legitimacy

structures rather than colonial appointment alone. These arrangements qualified as indirect rule because traditional authorities derived their standing from indigenous recognition and controlled actual policy spheres, even though their authority operated within boundaries established by metropolitan sovereignty. The decisive criterion is not the institutional form (elected parliament versus traditional authority) but whether indigenous institutions possess genuine decision-making capacity grounded in domestic legitimacy. Token advisory councils, appointed native authorities operating purely as colonial instruments, or traditional leaders whose authority derives solely from colonial designation rather than indigenous recognition do not constitute indirect rule, as these arrangements lack independent authority and domestic legitimation. In contrast, both elected parliaments with meaningful franchise and traditional authorities with authentic pre-colonial standing can fulfill the domestic legitimation requirement when they exercise binding authority over defined governance spheres.

This conceptual structure distinguishes both variants from semi-sovereign arrangements through domain-based criteria. In indirect rule, indigenous institutions may govern education, local administration, infrastructure, public health, or related domestic policy areas, but they do so under constitutional frameworks established and ultimately controlled by the metropolitan authority. The metropolitan power retains *de facto* control over at least some core domestic policy domains beyond foreign affairs and defense, such as overall economic policy, monetary authority, ultimate judicial control, or resource allocation. Semi-sovereign entities, by contrast, possess final authority over all domestic policy domains, with the external power confined exclusively to foreign relations and defense without veto capacity over internal matters. The boundary is therefore domain-based rather than institutional: the decisive question is whether the metropolitan government retains *de facto* control over any sphere of domestic governance beyond external relations. If it does, the arrangement remains a colonial regime, regardless of electoral participation or traditional authority structures within the territory. This logic ensures that the grouping of direct and indirect rule under a single category reflects their shared legitimation architecture, permanent external sovereignty with metropolitan control over fundamental governance questions, rather than superficial institutional similarities or legal designations. The grouping of direct and indirect rule regimes rests on their shared foundation of external sovereignty. Both variants subordinate the territory to metropolitan authority, which retains ultimate control over core domains of governance. They differ only in the presence or absence of a limited internal legitimation component, yet neither variant transfers sovereignty to indigenous institutions. Direct rule expresses pure external legitimation, while indirect rule introduces circumscribed indigenous authority within a constitutional framework designed and controlled

by the metropolitan power. This structural relationship explains why both forms constitute a single regime family: they vary in internal architecture but remain unified by the overriding primacy of metropolitan authority.

6.6.1.1 Direct Rule Colonial Regime

Conceptualization: Direct rule colonial regimes represent the purest form of external legitimation within colonial arrangements, characterized by comprehensive foreign control over all domains of governance without indigenous institutions exercising governance authority. Authority flows exclusively from the colonial metropolitan power, which governs through its own officials and administrative structures. All significant political, economic, and legal decisions are made by colonial administrators accountable solely to the metropolitan government, creating total accountability asymmetry in which rulers answer exclusively to external constituencies.

Colonial officials exercise direct control over policy formulation and execution across all domains including local administration, taxation, justice, education, and economic regulation. Indigenous populations may occupy subordinate administrative positions (clerks, interpreters, low-level functionaries) but these roles carry no decision-making authority. The absence of any internal legitimation component, whether electoral or traditional, ensures that authority derives entirely from external sovereignty without hybrid elements.

The critical boundary distinguishing direct rule from indirect rule lies in whether domestic institutions possess legitimation enabling governance functions. For indirect rule electoral variant, the threshold requires elected indigenous parliaments exercising legislative authority over defined domestic spheres through suffrage allowing meaningful participation, political liberties enabling competition, and actual decision-making capacity. Token parliaments without legislative powers, elections restricted to small colonial minorities, or assemblies systematically overridden by governors remain direct rule.

For indirect rule traditional variant, classification requires traditional authorities exercising governance authority rooted in authentic pre-colonial legitimacy recognized by the governed population, with binding decision-making power over defined policy spheres. Colonial appointees bearing traditional titles without population recognition, or traditional structures stripped of independent authority and reduced to administrative implementation, exemplify direct rule. The decisive test is whether domestic institutions exercise decision-making power through their own legitimation sources, or whether all authority flows from colonial appointment.

Elite structures consist exclusively of metropolitan officials and settlers, with indigenous elites excluded or incorporated into subordinate administrative roles. Cohesion operates through metropolitan institutional hierarchies and shared identification with the colonial power rather than domestic constituencies (Young 1994). This pure external legitimation structure maximizes metropolitan control but generates high costs in administrative capacity and indigenous resistance.

Operationalization: A colonial regime is classified as direct rule when domestic institutions lack channels for exercising governance authority through either electoral or traditional legitimation. All significant policy decisions are made by officials appointed by and accountable to the colonial metropolitan power. Where such institutions exist, they function ceremonially, operate as administrative instruments without independent decision-making capacity, or involve individuals lacking domestic legitimacy. The decisive criterion is whether these structures exercise governance authority through domestic legitimation (Mamdani 1996: 16-23).

Just-inside cases arise along three dimensions. Franchise restrictions create ambiguity when elections involve limited indigenous participation but exclude majorities; classification requires suffrage allowing significant autochthonous participation. Authority limitations create ambiguity when indigenous bodies exist formally but function consultatively; classification requires binding decision-making power within defined spheres. This demands both authentic pre-colonial continuity with population recognition and actual governance authority. Where formal provisions grant authority but practice systematically overrides decisions, classification follows factual structures.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: In French Algeria (1830-1898), governors-general appointed by Paris exercised comprehensive control over all governance domains without indigenous representation or traditional structures holding independent authority. German Deutsch-Südwestafrika (1884-1915) operated through direct Imperial command without indigenous participation via elected or traditional institutions. Both cases show pure external legitimation with complete exclusion of indigenous populations from governance authority.

Just-inside Cases: Belgian Congo after its transfer to Belgian state control (1908-1960) illustrates direct rule where consultative mechanisms existed but failed operational thresholds. Local conseils de chefferie operated under Belgian supervision but met none of the indirect rule criteria: they lacked meaningful franchise (not elected by indigenous populations), lacked decision-making authority (held no independent capacity and could be overridden at will), and lacked traditional authenticity (did not represent pre-colonial authority structures with

population recognition) (Young 1994: 126-134). Advisory mechanisms framed in electoral or traditional terms do not constitute indirect rule without satisfying all three operational thresholds: domestic legitimation source, binding authority, and (for traditional variant) authentic pre-colonial continuity.

Just-outside Cases: British Nigeria and French Algeria post-1898 cross the threshold into indirect rule through different legitimation sources. Northern Nigerian traditional emirate structures held authentic pre-colonial Islamic governance institutions with continued recognition and actual governance functions over customary law and local administration under British supervision. Southern Nigerian elected councils and French Algeria's Délégations Financières satisfied electoral variant requirements: meaningful indigenous franchise, political liberties enabling competition, and binding legislative authority within defined spheres. The threshold is clear: domestic institutions exercising actual decision-making capacity through their own legitimation sources (traditional recognition or electoral procedures) distinguish indirect rule from direct rule. In direct rule, indigenous participation remains purely administrative without governance authority.

6.6.1.2 Indirect Rule Colonial Regime

Conceptualization: Indirect rule colonial regimes introduce hierarchical dual legitimation within permanent colonial domination. Ultimate sovereignty remains vested in the foreign power, while indigenous institutions exercise governance authority over defined domestic policy areas through domestic legitimation. The metropolitan power establishes constitutional frameworks and retains override capacity, while indigenous institutions, whether elected parliaments or traditional authorities, exercise decision-making power within these areas through their standing among the governed population.

This dual legitimation pattern exhibits hierarchical ordering: external legitimation retains primacy through metropolitan sovereignty and control over boundaries of indigenous authority, while domestic legitimation operates substantively within allocated areas through metropolitan authorization establishing what policy areas exist and indigenous legitimation enabling actual governance through population compliance.

Within the overarching indirect rule classification, Va-PoReg distinguishes two subtypes based on the source of domestic legitimation. Electoral variant (subtype 1) involves elected indigenous parliaments deriving authority from electoral procedures meeting criteria for meaningful suffrage, political competition, and legislative authority over defined domestic policy areas. Traditional variant (subtype 2) involves traditional leaders, hereditary monarchs, or customary

councils deriving authority from traditional, hereditary, or religious legitimation recognized by the governed population, exercising governance functions over defined domestic policy areas. Both variants require that indigenous institutions hold decision-making power within their allocated areas rather than merely ceremonial or advisory roles.

The critical boundary distinguishing indirect rule from direct rule lies in whether indigenous institutions derive authority from domestic legitimation enabling governance functions. Direct rule involves pure external legitimation without indigenous structures exercising governance authority; where such structures exist under direct rule, they function ceremonially or as administrative instruments. The boundary distinguishing indirect rule from semi-sovereign entities lies in domain control: indirect rule retains metropolitan control over at least some core domestic policy areas, while semi-sovereign arrangements limit external control exclusively to foreign affairs and defense, with indigenous governments holding primary domestic authority over all internal governance.

Elite structures become more complex than under direct rule. Indigenous political elites gain positions through electoral competition, parliamentary participation, or traditional authority with domestic legitimation bases, creating domestic legitimation sources for their authority within limited domains (Mamdani 1996: 16-23). These indigenous elites coexist with metropolitan administrators retaining control over core sovereignty questions. Elite cohesion operates through distinct mechanisms: indigenous elites cohere through domestic political processes (party formation, electoral coalition-building, traditional hierarchies), whereas metropolitan officials maintain cohesion through colonial service hierarchies. This dual elite structure reflects the hybrid legitimation pattern, with potential for conflict between indigenous representatives pressing for expanded authority and metropolitan officials defending external control.

Operationalization: A colonial regime is classified as indirect rule when three conditions are satisfied. First, indigenous governmental institutions (elected parliaments, legislative councils, or traditional authorities) hold meaningful but limited authority over defined domestic policy areas. Second, these institutions derive authority from domestic legitimation rather than functioning purely as appointed instruments of colonial administration. Third, sovereignty plus control over at least some core domestic policy areas remain vested in the colonial metropolitan power.

Once a regime is classified as indirect rule, subtype classification proceeds based on the predominant source of domestic legitimation. The domestic legitimation criterion is decisive for distinguishing indirect from direct rule. Indigenous institutions must derive authority from domestic sources, whether through electoral procedures, traditional authority with domestic

legitimation, or recognized indigenous political elites serving as domestic legitimation sources. The criterion is not democratic quality per se, but the presence of a meaningful domestic legitimation component creating dual structures: metropolitan power retains sovereignty while indigenous institutions possess domestic legitimation bases (Young 1994). Appointed advisory councils whose members lack independent standing within indigenous society, or puppet legislatures deriving authority exclusively from colonial designation, lack the domestic legitimation component required.

For electoral variant classification, three cumulative criteria must be satisfied. Suffrage must extend voting rights to a non-marginal indigenous electorate with relevance for authorization of institutions; franchise systems effectively excluding indigenous majorities do not satisfy this criterion. Political liberties must enable opposition organization and competition, requiring freedom of assembly, association, and expression. Legislative authority must extend to actual policy formulation and implementation in defined domestic policy areas; councils empowered only to submit recommendations subject to metropolitan approval lack the authority required.

For traditional variant classification, three cumulative criteria must be satisfied. The authority structure must constitute a pre-colonial or indigenous institution with historical continuity rather than a colonial creation. Traditional authority must derive legitimation from the governed population based on customary, hereditary, or religious grounds; evidence includes continued observance of traditional protocols and population acceptance beyond colonial enforcement. Traditional authorities must perform actual governance functions over defined domestic policy areas, including adjudication, resource allocation, or local administration, making decisions with binding practical effect within assigned areas.

Cases where both electoral and traditional institutions exist are classified according to which legitimation source predominates in actual governance of major policy areas. Parallel presence of both institutional forms does not imply parallel authority; one source provides the primary basis for indigenous governance. The test is which source predominates: electoral mandates through competitive procedures, or traditional recognition through customary grounds. Transitions from traditional to electoral variant (or vice versa) as constitutional reforms shift the predominant legitimation basis constitute regime-critical events requiring documentation.

Just-inside cases arise along three dimensions requiring distinct analysis.

First, franchise restrictions: Elections involving substantial but restricted participation create ambiguity; classification requires that participants constitute recognized elites whose authority derives from indigenous standing rather than purely from colonial appointment.

Second, authority limitations: Indigenous parliaments or traditional councils with severely circumscribed powers create ambiguity; classification requires binding decision-making capacity within at least some defined domestic policy areas rather than purely consultative functions.

Third, traditional authenticity: Colonial powers utilizing indigenous leadership structures but systematically subordinating them create ambiguity; classification requires both authentic pre-colonial continuity with population recognition and actual governance authority, not merely traditional titles.

Where formal provisions grant authority but practice systematically overrides decisions, classification follows factual structures.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: British India under the Government of India Acts (particularly 1935-1947) exemplifies indirect rule colonial regime, electoral variant. Provincial legislatures elected through expanded franchise exercised binding legislative authority within defined domestic policy areas based on electoral legitimation. The British retained control over defense, foreign affairs, overall economic policy, and reserve powers. Indigenous representatives derived authority from domestic electoral procedures and possessed recognized standing within Indian society. Sovereignty remained with the British Crown through the Viceroy and provincial governors who retained override capacity.

Lesotho under British colonial administration (1900-1966) exemplifies indirect rule colonial regime, traditional variant. Basotho paramount chiefs possessed traditional legitimation recognized by the Basotho population. They governed through customary law and traditional administration under British supervision, exercising actual governance functions over local adjudication, resource allocation, and customary matters within defined domestic policy areas. The chiefs derived authority from authentic pre-colonial legitimation structures with continued population recognition rather than from colonial appointment.

Just-inside Cases: French Algeria under the Délégations Financières system (1898-1945) represents a restrictive electoral variant where domestic legitimation and authority dimensions approached lower thresholds. The Délégations included elected indigenous Muslim representatives alongside French settler representatives, holding authority over budgetary matters and some local governance questions within defined domestic policy areas. Franchise restrictions severely limited indigenous participation through property qualifications and exclusion of the vast majority of Muslims. Despite restricted franchise, elected Muslim representatives possessed some domestic legitimation through their standing within Algerian political elite networks. French administrators retained extensive override capacity and maintained control over

fundamental policy areas beyond budgetary jurisdiction. This illustrates classification at the lower boundary: sufficient electoral legitimation and binding authority over defined domestic policy areas meet minimal thresholds, but restrictions on both dimensions approach the threshold below which direct rule classification would apply.

Just-outside Cases: German Deutsch-Südwestafrika under direct rule lacked indigenous institutions with authority or domestic legitimation. Indigenous populations possessed no representative institutions, and appointed native authorities functioned as instruments of German control without independent legitimation or decision-making capacity. This demonstrates the absence of the domestic legitimation component that distinguishes indirect from direct rule.

Semi-sovereign entities retaining primary domestic authority over all internal matters while delegating only foreign affairs and defense position themselves beyond indirect rule colonial status. The threshold is domain-based: indirect rule retains metropolitan control over at least some core domestic policy areas, while semi-sovereign arrangements limit external control exclusively to external relations.

Aggregation rules for colonial regimes

vaporeg_regtype_reports / vaporeg_regtype_detailed

100 Direct Rule Colonial Regime

110 Indirect Rule Colonial Regime

vaporeg_regtype_compact

100 Colonial Regime → Combines Direct Rule Colonial Regime (100) and Indirect Rule Colonial Regime (110) into a single category for simplified typologies.

vaporeg_regtype_triple

3 Non-Democracy → Colonial Regimes (100, 110) are merged into the broad 'Non-Democracy' family for the threefold typology (Democracy, Hybrid Regimes, Autocracy).

vaporeg_regtype_bindem

0 Non-democracy → Colonial Regimes are classified as 'Non-democracy' in the basic dichotomy.

6.6.2. Occupation Regime

Conceptualization: Occupation regimes constitute the temporary variant of external legitimation, framed as provisional responses to military conflict, security crises, or state collapse rather

than as permanent systems of foreign domination. Unlike colonial regimes, which are designed to indefinitely maintain control, occupation regimes justify external authority through narratives of restoring order, preventing violence, executing internationally sanctioned missions, or addressing extraordinary circumstances requiring temporary foreign intervention. The defining feature uniting all occupation arrangements, whether direct or indirect rule, is the claimed temporality of external control, with the occupying power presenting its authority as transitional measures pending resolution of the crisis, establishment of stable governance, or completion of specific objectives.

The temporal framing distinguishes occupation from colonial legitimation despite structural similarities in external control. Occupying powers claim authority through crisis narratives (post-conflict stabilization, security threats, humanitarian intervention) rather than through doctrines of permanent civilizational hierarchy or imperial mandate. This temporal claim may or may not correspond to actual practice; many occupations extend far beyond their initially claimed duration, and some transition into *de facto* permanent control resembling colonial arrangements. Following Va-PoReg's *de facto* classification principle, the distinction between occupation and colonial regime rests not solely on stated intentions but on the legitimation narrative deployed and the institutional framework established. Occupations typically operate through military governance structures or international administration frameworks rather than through permanent colonial civil administrations, reflecting the provisional framing even when control proves enduring in practice.

Occupation regimes vary along the same legitimation gradient as colonial regimes, reflecting different strategies for organizing authority within the overarching framework of external sovereignty. This variation does not alter the fundamental accountability structure, which remains oriented toward the occupying power rather than the governed population, but introduces differing degrees of indigenous participation in governance. Direct rule occupation regimes operate through pure external legitimation, where the occupying power governs through its own military or administrative officials with comprehensive control over all policy domains and no indigenous legislative authority. Indirect rule occupation regimes introduce a hybrid legitimation structure while maintaining ultimate external sovereignty, permitting elected indigenous institutions with genuine though circumscribed authority over defined governance spheres while the occupying power retains control over core domains including security, foreign affairs, and fundamental constitutional questions.

The upper boundary of occupation regimes is defined by the same domain threshold as colonial regimes. Occupation regimes, whether direct or indirect rule, retain control over at least some

domestic policy domains beyond foreign affairs and security. When indigenous governments exercise full autonomous authority over all domestic domains and external control is limited exclusively to foreign affairs and defense without veto capacity over internal matters, the arrangement transitions beyond occupation status toward semi-sovereign or independent classification, regardless of whether the transition occurs through formal peace treaties, international recognition, or gradual withdrawal of occupying forces.

Additional Remarks: To provide a comprehensive understanding of occupation regimes, our dataset includes a variable for the dominant political authority. This variable identifies the name of the country that is exercising control over the occupied territory. Additionally, the dataset features variables, `vaporeg_detailed_of_gc` and `vaporeg_compact_of_gc`, which denote the political regime type of the occupying country. The inclusion of this variable is predicated on the assumption that the regime type of the occupying power significantly impacts the characteristics and governance style of the occupation regime. By analyzing these variables, researchers can gain insights into how the nature of the occupying power influences the administration and policies implemented in the occupied territory.

The detailed version of our classification differentiates between direct and indirect rule within occupation regimes, whereas the compact version does not make this distinction.

6.6.2.1. Direct Rule Occupation Regime

Conceptualization: Direct rule occupation regimes represent the purest form of external legitimation within occupation arrangements, characterized by comprehensive foreign control over all governance domains exercised through military administration or occupation authorities without mediation through indigenous institutions possessing genuine authority or domestic legitimation sources. Authority flows exclusively from the occupying power, which governs the territory through its own military governors, occupation administrators, or appointed officials rather than through pre-existing national institutions or newly established indigenous bodies. The indigenous population remains in the status of pure subjects of foreign rule, lacking institutional channels for political participation in governance decisions beyond potential advisory or consultative roles without decision-making capacity. No domestic legitimation component exists during direct rule occupation; authority derives entirely from external sovereignty without hybrid elements.

The majority of direct rule occupation regimes historically have been hostile wartime occupations characterized by military conquest, suppression of indigenous resistance, economic exploitation, and governance structures designed to serve occupying power interests rather than occupied population welfare (Mazower 2008). These hostile occupations typically emerge from interstate war, with occupying forces imposing comprehensive control through military administration, dissolving or subordinating pre-existing governmental structures, and governing through coercion rather than consent. Economic exploitation, forced labor, resource extraction, and policies serving occupying power strategic objectives dominate hostile occupation governance. A minority of direct rule occupations, primarily post-World War II Allied occupations and some international peacekeeping missions, have operated as state-building or stabilization projects with stated objectives of democratization, reconstruction, or conflict resolution rather than permanent subjugation or exploitation. These state-building occupations differ in legitimation narratives and governance approaches but share the structural feature of comprehensive external control without indigenous institutions possessing genuine authority or domestic legitimation bases.

Direct rule occupation instantiates the external legitimation pattern through complete exclusion of the governed population from authority structures during the occupation period. Occupation officials, appointed by and responsible to the occupying power or international bodies authorizing the occupation, exercise direct control over policy formulation and execution across all domains including security, justice, economic regulation, and civil administration. Pre-existing national institutions are typically dissolved, suspended, or subordinated to occupation authority. Indigenous populations may occupy subordinate administrative positions under occupation supervision, but these roles carry no independent decision-making authority and function as extensions of occupation control rather than as channels for indigenous political agency.

Elite structures under direct rule occupation consist primarily of occupation personnel (military officers, occupation administrators, appointed officials) accountable to the occupying power or mandating international bodies. In hostile wartime occupations, pre-existing indigenous elites are typically removed from power through arrest, exile, execution, or forced subordination. In state-building occupations, indigenous elites may be co-opted into advisory roles or retained in subordinate positions without autonomous authority pending establishment of new political structures. Cohesion among occupation elites operates through military command hierarchies or international administrative structures rather than through domestic constituencies. This pure external legitimation structure is employed during active military campaigns, in territories

where occupying powers distrust or actively suppress indigenous populations, or in immediate post-conflict periods before indigenous institutions with domestic legitimation are established.

Operationalization: Following Va-PoReg's de facto classification principle, an occupation regime is classified as direct rule when actual control structures meet the following criteria: (1) no indigenous governmental institutions exist with genuine authority over any sphere of domestic governance during the occupation, (2) all significant policy decisions across domains are made by occupation officials appointed by and accountable to the occupying power or mandating international bodies, and (3) indigenous populations lack institutional channels for political participation beyond purely consultative or advisory roles without decision-making capacity, and indigenous figures lack domestic legitimation sources independent of occupation appointment. Classification is based on de facto control structures rather than formal provisions or stated intentions.

Pre-existing national institutions (parliaments, governments, courts) that are dissolved, suspended, or rendered ineffective by occupation authority do not constitute indigenous governance for classification purposes. The decisive criterion is whether indigenous institutions with genuine authority and domestic legitimation sources are established or permitted to function during the occupation, not whether such institutions existed before occupation commenced. Token advisory councils, appointed local administrators under occupation supervision, or consultative bodies without binding decision-making capacity do not alter direct rule classification. Appointed indigenous figures who derive authority exclusively from occupation designation and lack independent standing within indigenous society or recognition by domestic constituencies do not constitute domestic legitimation components.

Just-inside cases arise along two dimensions. First, domestic legitimation ambiguity creates borderline situations when indigenous participation exists but domestic legitimation sources are weak or absent. Indigenous figures in advisory roles who possess some personal standing within indigenous society but lack institutional authority or electoral mandate represent Just-inside cases requiring assessment of whether genuine domestic legitimation components exist. Second, authority limitations create ambiguity when indigenous bodies exist formally but lack genuine decision-making capacity in practice. Councils whose recommendations are systematically ignored or overridden by occupation authorities, or bodies with purely advisory functions despite claims of authority, lack the genuine authority required for indirect rule classification. Cases must fail both dimensions (no domestic legitimation AND no genuine authority) to remain classified as direct rule. When either domestic legitimation sources or genuine authority emerge, transition to indirect rule occurs.

Transitions from direct to indirect rule occupation are coded when indigenous institutions with genuine authority and domestic legitimation sources are established, typically through elections (universal or restricted franchise with participants possessing indigenous standing), recognition of traditional authorities with domestic legitimacy, or establishment of governmental structures with elite participation deriving authority from indigenous society. Transitions to semi-sovereign status occur when indigenous governments assume full control over all domestic domains and occupation control becomes limited exclusively to foreign affairs and security. The July 1st temporal anchor applies: the regime structure in place on July 1st determines classification for that year, with transitions recorded through separate variables.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Nazi occupation of Poland through the Generalgouvernement (1939-1945), Soviet occupation of the Baltic States (1940-1941, 1944-1991 initial phases), and Japanese occupation of China (1937-1945) exemplify hostile direct rule occupation regimes characterized by comprehensive external control and complete exclusion of indigenous populations from authority structures (Mazower 2008). The Generalgouvernement operated under German military and civilian administration headed by Hans Frank, exercising total control over Polish territory with all governance decisions made by German authorities (Gross 1979: 40-73). Pre-existing Polish governmental institutions were dissolved, Polish elites systematically targeted for elimination or subjugation, and the occupation served German strategic and economic interests through forced labor, resource extraction, and territorial reorganization without any indigenous political participation or domestic legitimation components. Soviet occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania involved comprehensive Soviet control through military administration and Communist Party structures, dissolution of indigenous governments, and imposition of Soviet governance systems without indigenous institutions possessing genuine authority or domestic legitimation during initial occupation phases (Applebaum 2012: 3-31). Japanese occupation of China operated through nominal puppet regimes lacking genuine authority or domestic legitimation, with Japanese military administration exercising comprehensive control (Mazower 2008). These hostile wartime occupations represent the historically dominant form of direct rule occupation, demonstrating pure external legitimation through military conquest with governance structures designed to serve occupying power interests through coercion and political suppression.

Just-inside Cases: Afghanistan under US-led occupation (2001-2004) and Iraq under the Coalition Provisional Authority (2003-2004) represent Just-inside and transitional cases between direct rule and indirect rule occupation. In Afghanistan from 2001 until presidential elections

in September 2004, US and coalition forces exercised comprehensive control through military administration and appointed transitional authorities. The Afghan Interim Administration and Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, while including Afghan figures, derived authority primarily from international designation and coalition support rather than from domestic legitimation sources such as elections or traditional authority recognition covering the entire territory. Indigenous participation existed but lacked the electoral mandate or broad-based traditional legitimacy required for indirect rule classification during this initial phase. Iraq under CPA (2003-2004) operated through appointed Iraqi Governing Council comprising Iraqi figures who provided input to occupation authorities but possessed no independent legislative or executive powers, with key decisions remaining with CPA administrator Paul Bremer. Despite different legitimation narratives (liberation and state-building versus conquest and exploitation in paradigmatic hostile cases), the structural features align with direct rule during these phases: absence of indigenous institutions with binding authority derived from domestic legitimation sources, comprehensive occupation control over all policy domains, and indigenous participation limited to advisory roles or transitional administration pending establishment of elected institutions.

Just-outside Cases: Afghanistan transitioned from direct rule occupation to indirect rule occupation in September 2004 when presidential elections with universal suffrage established an elected Afghan government with genuine authority over domestic civil administration, education, and social policy, while US and coalition forces retained control over security operations, foreign affairs, and capacity to intervene in governance. The elected government derived legitimacy from domestic electoral procedures, creating an internal legitimation component and establishing dual legitimation structures characteristic of indirect rule. Cuba under US occupation (1899-1902) similarly exemplifies indirect rule occupation, with municipal elections in June 1900 enabling Cuban ruling elites to participate in government with genuine authority over local administration despite restricted franchise. Indigenous elite participation created domestic legitimation components even under restricted franchise, as Cuban officials derived authority from their standing within Cuban society rather than purely from US appointment. These transitions and cases illustrate the decisive boundary: direct rule involves pure external legitimation with indigenous population as subjects lacking political participation channels and domestic legitimation sources, while indirect rule involves dual legitimation structures where indigenous institutions possess domestic legitimacy bases (through elections, elite participation with indigenous standing, or traditional authority) and genuine authority within circumscribed spheres despite continued occupation sovereignty. The establishment of indigenous institutions with

domestic legitimation sources and genuine decision-making capacity marks the threshold crossing from direct to indirect rule occupation.

6.6.2.2 Indirect Rule Occupation Regime

Conceptualization: Indirect rule occupation regimes represent a significant modification of pure external control by introducing limited indigenous political participation within the overarching framework of occupation authority. The indigenous population gains certain influence through elected representatives, recognized governmental structures, or traditional elite participation, transitioning from pure subjects of foreign rule to limited political actors. Indigenous governments or parliaments exercise genuine, though fundamentally circumscribed, authority over defined spheres of domestic governance such as civil administration, education, local economic policy, health services, or social welfare. These indigenous institutions derive their authority partially from domestic legitimation sources (whether through electoral procedures with universal or restricted franchise, traditional authority structures, elite networks with indigenous standing, or continuation of pre-occupation governmental recognition), creating a partial internal legitimation component alongside the external legitimation structure embodied in continued occupation control (Mamdani 1996).

However, this participation remains fundamentally circumscribed: ultimate sovereignty, control over security and foreign affairs, authority over at least some core domestic policy domains, and capacity to override indigenous decisions on matters deemed essential to occupation objectives remain vested in the occupying power. This creates a dual legitimation structure where domestic political participation and indigenous authority coexist with external sovereignty and occupation control. Indigenous parliaments or governments answer to their domestic constituencies or derive legitimacy from indigenous elite networks within their limited spheres, while occupation authorities retain ultimate control and answer to the occupying power or mandating international bodies. The hybrid nature positions indirect rule occupation between direct military government (pure external legitimation, indigenous population as pure subjects) and semi-sovereign status (full domestic control over all internal affairs, foreign control limited exclusively to external relations and defense).

The upper boundary of indirect rule occupation is defined by the domain threshold. Indirect rule occupation regimes, despite permitting indigenous governments or elected institutions to exercise authority over specified domestic spheres, retain occupation control over at least some core domestic policy domains (such as overall economic policy, monetary policy, aspects of internal security, or control over strategic resources) in addition to foreign affairs and defense.

When indigenous governments exercise full autonomous authority over all domestic domains and occupation control is limited exclusively to foreign affairs and security policy without veto capacity over internal matters, the arrangement transitions from indirect rule occupation to semi-sovereign status. The distinction is not the presence of elected indigenous institutions (both may have them) but whether the occupation retains control over or intervention capacity in any domestic policy sphere beyond external relations.

Elite structures under indirect rule occupation become more complex than under direct rule. Indigenous political elites gain or retain positions through electoral competition during occupation, participation in recognized governmental structures, or traditional elite standing with domestic legitimacy bases, creating domestic legitimation sources for their authority within limited domains. However, these indigenous elites operate under occupation oversight, with occupation authorities retaining ultimate control and intervention capacity including removal of indigenous officials deemed uncooperative or threatening to occupation objectives. Elite cohesion operates through two distinct mechanisms: indigenous elites cohere through domestic political processes (party formation, governmental continuity, traditional hierarchies, or elite networks) or derive legitimacy from indigenous constituencies, while occupation authorities maintain separate command structures accountable to occupying powers or international mandates.

Operationalization: Following Va-PoReg's de facto classification principle, an occupation regime is classified as indirect rule when actual control structures meet the following criteria: (1) indigenous governmental institutions exist that possess genuine, though limited, authority over defined spheres of domestic governance, (2) these indigenous institutions derive authority at least partially from domestic legitimation sources rather than functioning purely as appointed instruments of occupation administration, and (3) ultimate sovereignty, control over security and foreign affairs, and control over at least some core domestic policy domains remain vested in the occupying power or mandating international bodies. All three conditions must be satisfied: indigenous institutions without domestic legitimation sources (puppet regimes deriving authority solely from occupation appointment), or indigenous institutions without genuine authority (purely consultative bodies), or complete domestic sovereignty (occupation controls only foreign affairs and security) disqualify the regime from this classification.

The domestic legitimation criterion is decisive for distinguishing indirect from direct rule occupation. Indigenous institutions must derive authority from domestic sources (whether through electoral procedures with universal suffrage, restricted elite elections with participants possessing indigenous standing, traditional authority structures with domestic legitimacy, elite

networks recognized within indigenous society, or continuation of pre-occupation governmental structures with indigenous recognition), not purely from occupation appointment. The criterion is not franchise breadth or democratic quality but the presence of an internal legitimation component creating dual legitimation structures: occupation retains ultimate sovereignty while indigenous institutions possess domestic legitimacy bases. Appointed councils or puppet regimes whose members derive authority exclusively from occupation designation, lacking independent standing within indigenous society or recognition by domestic constituencies, lack the domestic legitimation component required for indirect rule classification.

Authority must be genuine in practice, not merely consultative on paper. Indigenous parliaments or governments must possess actual decision-making capacity within their designated spheres, including ability to make binding decisions on domestic administration, implement policies within their jurisdiction, and exercise governance functions that occupation authorities respect rather than routinely override. Puppet regimes that exist nominally but whose every significant decision requires occupation approval or is dictated by occupation authorities lack the genuine authority required for indirect rule. The criterion is whether indigenous institutions exercise binding authority in at least some defined spheres in actual practice, assessed through policy implementation patterns, occupation intervention frequency, and indigenous capacity to make decisions without occupation pre-approval on matters within their jurisdiction.

Just-inside cases arise when either domestic legitimation sources are weak or ambiguous, when indigenous authority is severely circumscribed, or when the boundary with semi-sovereign status becomes unclear. Domestic legitimation borderlines occur when indigenous institutions possess some legitimacy within restricted segments of society but lack broader recognition, or when elections involve substantial but restricted participation with ambiguous indigenous standing of participants. Authority borderlines occur when indigenous governments exercise genuine authority over routine domestic administration but face occupation override on any matter deemed significant by occupiers, representing minimal indirect rule. The upper boundary borderline arises when indigenous governments exercise increasingly autonomous authority over most domestic domains and occupation control becomes primarily limited to foreign affairs and security, requiring assessment of whether occupation retains control over or veto capacity in any domestic policy sphere beyond external relations. Cases at the lower threshold, where domestic legitimation sources are present but limited and authority covers at least some binding decisions, qualify as minimal indirect rule. Cases approaching the upper threshold, where domestic control is extensive but occupation retains some domestic policy influence

beyond security and foreign affairs, remain indirect rule until the domain threshold to semi-sovereign status is crossed.

The temporal anchor (July 1st) determines classification for each year. Transitions from direct to indirect rule occupation are coded when indigenous institutions with genuine authority and domestic legitimation sources are established or permitted to resume functioning. Transitions from indirect rule to semi-sovereign status occur when occupation control over domestic policy domains ends and authority becomes limited exclusively to foreign affairs and security without veto capacity over internal governance. Transitions from indirect rule back to direct rule occur when occupation authorities dissolve or suspend indigenous institutions and reassume comprehensive direct control.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Afghanistan under US-led occupation (2004-2009) and Cuba under US occupation (1899-1902) exemplify indirect rule occupation regimes where indigenous institutions with domestic legitimation exercised genuine though circumscribed authority under occupation oversight. In Afghanistan following presidential elections in September 2004 with universal suffrage and parliamentary elections in 2005, an elected Afghan government operated with real authority over domestic civil administration, education, health services, and social policy, while US and NATO forces retained control over security operations, foreign affairs, overall economic policy affecting international aid and reconstruction, and capacity to intervene in Afghan governance when deemed necessary for counterterrorism or stabilization objectives. The elected government derived legitimacy from domestic electoral procedures, creating an internal legitimation component, while ultimate sovereignty and control over core domains remained with occupation forces. Cuba under US military government (1899-1902) operated through municipal elections in June 1900, where despite restricted suffrage limited to a small fraction of the population, the Cuban ruling elite participated in government of the country with genuine authority over local administration, taxation within municipalities, and routine civil governance. Indigenous elite participation created a domestic legitimation component even under restricted franchise, as Cuban officials derived authority from their standing within Cuban society rather than purely from US appointment, while US military government retained control over foreign affairs, defense, overall economic policy, and capacity to intervene in Cuban governance. Both cases demonstrate dual legitimation structures characteristic of indirect rule: occupation retention of ultimate control and authority over core domains combined with indigenous institutions possessing domestic legitimacy bases and genuine authority within circumscribed spheres.

Just-inside Cases: Vichy France (1940-1944, particularly before Operation Anton on 11/11/1942) represents a complex Just-inside case between indirect rule occupation and protectorate-type semi-sovereign status, illuminating the critical upper boundary of indirect rule occupation. The Vichy government under Marshal Pétain exercised comprehensive control over domestic policy domains including justice, internal security (police and milice), economic administration, fiscal policy, and civil governance in the unoccupied zone, with genuine decision-making capacity and implementation authority across these spheres. This extensive domestic control suggests semi-sovereign status under the domain threshold, as Vichy retained authority over virtually all internal governance matters. However, German military presence in the occupied zone, capacity to intervene in French governance across zones, control over strategic resources and key industries, influence over economic policy through armistice terms, and the fundamental occupation context created by military defeat and armistice agreement argue for indirect rule occupation classification. The case illuminates the critical question defining the upper boundary: when does genuine domestic control under foreign military presence and strategic subordination constitute semi-sovereign protectorate versus indirect rule occupation? The distinction hinges on assessing whether the occupying power retains control over or systematic intervention capacity in domestic policy domains beyond security and foreign affairs. Vichy's extensive domestic autonomy, particularly in the period before Operation Anton when the unoccupied zone functioned with greater independence from direct German administrative control, positions it at the upper boundary of indirect rule occupation, approaching the semi-sovereign threshold. After Operation Anton, when Germany occupied the entire French territory, Vichy's status became more clearly indirect rule occupation with more circumscribed indigenous authority and more direct German oversight, though the government retained administrative functions and domestic governance capacity distinguishing it from direct rule.

Just-outside Cases: Afghanistan under US-led occupation (2001-2004) and Iraq under Coalition Provisional Authority (2003-2004) represent direct rule occupation arrangements lacking the dual legitimation structures characteristic of indirect rule. During these phases, occupation authorities exercised comprehensive control without indigenous institutions possessing genuine authority derived from domestic legitimation sources. Afghanistan during 2001-2004 operated through appointed transitional authorities deriving authority primarily from international designation rather than from domestic electoral mandate or traditional authority recognition covering the territory. Iraq under CPA operated through appointed Iraqi Governing Council lacking independent legislative or executive powers, with authority residing in occupation administration. The absence of domestic legitimation components (no elections, no recognized traditional

authority structures with governance capacity, no continuation of pre-occupation governmental legitimacy) and lack of genuine indigenous authority distinguish these direct rule phases from the subsequent indirect rule periods after elections established indigenous governments with domestic legitimation. Allied occupation of West Germany transitioned to semi-sovereign status after establishment of the Federal Republic in 1949, when the elected German government assumed full authority over all domestic domains (economy, fiscal policy, justice, internal administration) while Allied powers retained control only over foreign affairs and security through the Occupation Statute. Similarly, Japan transitioned to semi-sovereign status after the 1947 constitution, with the elected Diet and government exercising complete domestic authority while SCAP retained control over external relations. These cases crossed the domain threshold beyond indirect rule occupation to semi-sovereign status by achieving full domestic autonomy, demonstrating the upper boundary: when occupation control becomes limited exclusively to foreign affairs and security without retention of authority over any domestic policy sphere, the arrangement transitions beyond occupation classification. The distinction between indirect rule occupation (which retains some domestic policy control beyond foreign/security) and semi-sovereign status (external control limited exclusively to foreign/security) defines the critical upper boundary of occupation regimes within the external legitimation pattern.

6.7. Special Cases

The category Special Cases encompasses political situations that fall outside the legitimation pattern framework structuring regime classification. Unlike regimes based on electoral, personalist, institutional, ideological, or external legitimation, these cases represent conditions where the organizing logic of authority cannot be assessed because either no effective central authority exists to structure political power (No Central Authority) or the territory functions as an integrated administrative unit within another sovereign state (Part of Other Country). Special Cases do not constitute legitimation patterns in the analytical sense employed throughout this typology. They represent instead the absence of conditions required for regime analysis: either the collapse of central governance structures or the lack of separate political entity status necessary for independent regime classification.

These cases differ fundamentally from all legitimation-based regime types in lacking the institutional architecture that legitimation patterns describe. Electoral regimes structure authority through competitive procedures and representative institutions. Personalist regimes organize power around individual rulers and patron-client networks. Institutional regimes operate

through organizational hierarchies such as military command or party structures. Ideological regimes structure authority through doctrinal blueprints and belief systems. External legitimation regimes derive authority from foreign powers through colonial or occupation arrangements, maintaining separate governing structures (colonial administrations, occupation authorities) that constitute distinct political entities requiring regime classification despite external control. Each of these patterns, however varied in their organizing logic, presupposes the existence of identifiable authority structures that can be analyzed according to their legitimation basis. Special Cases lack this prerequisite: either central authority has fragmented beyond meaningful analysis or no separate governing structures exist warranting independent regime assessment.

The two Special Cases categories represent fundamentally different situations precluding regime classification. No Central Authority designates state collapse, extreme fragmentation, or civil war conditions where no unified governing body exercises effective control over the capital and substantial portions of national territory. Multiple factions, warlords, militias, or local authorities control different regions without overarching coordination, creating governance vacuums characterized by political chaos and competing power centers unable to implement consistent policies. These situations typically emerge during severe civil conflicts when central state institutions cease to exist or become so ineffective that they cannot claim authority over the polity. Part of Other Country designates territories politically and administratively integrated into another sovereign state's governance structures, functioning as administrative units (provinces, regions, constituent republics) within that state's regime system rather than as separate political entities with distinct governing structures requiring independent regime analysis. While both categories preclude regime classification, they represent opposite conditions: No Central Authority involves the disintegration of governance structures, while Part of Other Country involves integration into another state's governance framework.

6.7.1. No Central Authority

Conceptualization: No Central Authority designates political situations characterized by the collapse or fragmentation of central governing structures to a degree that precludes meaningful regime classification. Unlike regime types based on legitimation patterns (electoral, personalist, institutional, ideological, or external), this category represents the absence of unified authority capable of exercising control over the capital and substantial portions of national territory. Authority has disintegrated into competing power centers without coordination, each controlling

discrete territorial segments through coercive capacity rather than through institutionalized legitimation claims. Multiple factions, warlords, militias, or local authorities exercise de facto control over separate regions without overarching political framework, shared institutions, or coordination mechanisms.

This condition differs fundamentally from all regime types in representing political disorganization rather than political organization. Even weak or repressive regimes maintain identifiable institutional architectures: electoral regimes operate through competitive procedures, personalist regimes through patronage networks from recognizable centers, institutional regimes through organizational hierarchies, ideological regimes through doctrinal frameworks, and external legitimation regimes through colonial or occupation administrations. No Central Authority lacks these basic prerequisites: no center from which authority emanates, no coordination mechanisms implementing policies, and no institutional structures organizing power according to legitimation logic (Rotberg 2004).

Elite structures fragment along territorial and factional lines. Multiple competing elite networks (warlords, militia commanders, faction leaders) control specific regions through military capacity and local alliances rather than through participation in national institutions. Cohesion operates only within discrete factions through personal loyalty, ethnic ties, or material incentives (loot, protection, resource access), not through institutional hierarchies spanning the polity. No mechanisms coordinate elites across factions, and competition manifests as armed conflict over territorial control rather than political contestation within institutional frameworks (Reno 1999).

Operationalization: A political situation is classified as No Central Authority when: (1) no unified governing body exercises effective control over both the national capital and at least one-third of national territory, (2) territory is divided among multiple competing factions controlling discrete regions without coordination or mutual recognition, and (3) no functioning central state institutions exist capable of implementing policies or coordinating administrative functions across the polity. All three conditions must be satisfied. Weak states maintaining nominal control over capitals and symbolic authority despite limited territorial reach do not qualify if functioning national institutions exist and are recognized by significant portions of the polity.

The territorial control threshold (capital plus one-third of territory) distinguishes extreme state weakness from complete authority collapse. Central authority exercising effective control over the capital and substantial minority of territory retains sufficient institutional capacity to constitute a weak regime rather than complete collapse, provided central institutions continue

functioning within their zones. The criterion reflects that even limited but functioning central governance with territorial base differs fundamentally from complete fragmentation into uncoordinated power centers.

The coordination criterion distinguishes No Central Authority from federalism, regionalism, or partition arrangements where multiple authorities maintain coordination mechanisms or mutual recognition. No Central Authority involves complete absence of such frameworks: competing factions relate purely through armed competition without shared institutional structures or recognition of mutual authority.

Just-inside cases arise when weak central governments maintain minimal institutional functions while lacking majority territorial control, or when one faction dominates the capital while others control peripheries. Assessment must determine whether functioning national institutions exist capable of policy implementation across their zones, or whether authority has fragmented into uncoordinated power centers. Internationally recognized governments controlling capitals and maintaining bureaucracies despite limited reach typically remain classified as weak regimes. Cases where multiple factions control roughly equal territories without any claimant maintaining functioning national institutions constitute No Central Authority.

The July 1st temporal anchor applies: the control situation on 07/01 determines classification. Transitions out occur when one faction establishes control over capital and substantial territory, reconstituting functioning central institutions. Transitions in are coded when central governments collapse under civil war or regime breakdown.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Somalia following Siad Barre's overthrow (01/26/1991) and Afghanistan after Najibullah's ouster (04/16/1992) exemplify paradigmatic No Central Authority (Menkhaus 2007). In Somalia post-1991, no unified body controlled Mogadishu or provided national governance. Clan-based factions fragmented into competing warlord militias controlling discrete regions (divided Mogadishu, independent Puntland and Somaliland, various southern factions) without coordination. No functioning national institutions implemented policies, and factions competed through armed conflict over ports, aid, and trade routes. Afghanistan 1992-1996 experienced similar fragmentation after Mujahideen victory. Multiple factions (Jamiat-e Islami, Hezb-e Islami, Junbish-i Milli, Hezb-e Wahdat) controlled different regions and fought over Kabul without establishing coordinated national administration. Both demonstrate complete fragmentation: no unified capital control, multiple uncoordinated factions, absent central institutions, sustained armed competition without institutional frameworks.

Just-inside Cases: Libya post-2011 and Yemen during civil war phases represent borderline No Central Authority situations at the lower threshold of the category, approaching but not crossing into civil war between weak competing regimes. Libya after Gaddafi's overthrow featured competing authorities (Tripoli-based GNA, Tobruk-based House of Representatives with Haftar forces) both claiming legitimacy and maintaining minimal governmental functions, combined with multiple independently operating armed groups controlling discrete territories. Despite rival authorities maintaining some bureaucratic structures and international recognition, neither controlled majority territory or provided coordinated governance across substantial portions of the polity, and their institutional capacity remained insufficient to constitute functioning regimes even of weak type. The minimal bureaucratic functions and symbolic authority of competing claimants position Libya at the borderline: sufficient fragmentation and absence of effective central institutions to qualify as No Central Authority, yet closer to the threshold of weak competing governments than paradigmatic complete collapse cases. Yemen with rival authorities (internationally recognized government controlling limited southern territory, Houthi forces controlling Sanaa and northern regions, Southern Transitional Council, various militias) similarly qualifies as borderline No Central Authority. Competing claimants maintain minimal governmental functions within their zones and receive external recognition, yet none exercises effective control over capital and substantial territory simultaneously, and no coordination mechanisms span the competing authorities. These Just-inside cases illuminate the lower threshold of No Central Authority: when competing authorities maintain minimal institutional functions and territorial concentrations but lack sufficient control and coordination to constitute even weak regimes, the situation qualifies as No Central Authority despite differences from paradigmatic total collapse scenarios.

Just-outside Cases: Syria during civil war maintained continuous Damascus control and functioning governmental institutions despite severe territorial losses, distinguishing it from No Central Authority despite state weakness. The Assad regime continued implementing policies and exercising coordinated governance within its territory throughout conflict. Iraq under US occupation (2003-2009) avoided No Central Authority because occupation authorities provided external governance structures coordinating policy implementation despite instability. External authority provision distinguishes occupation regimes from No Central Authority even when indigenous institutions are weak. DRC during Second Congo War (1998-2003) retained minimal Kinshasa governmental functions while eastern regions came under rebel control with quasi-governmental structures, creating weak government with de facto partition rather than complete authority collapse.

6.7.2. Part of Other Country

Conceptualization: Part of Other Country designates territories that are politically and administratively integrated into another sovereign state's governance structures, functioning as administrative units (provinces, regions, constituent republics, overseas departments) within that state's regime system without separate regime-level governance. These territories do not constitute independent political entities requiring regime analysis, as they are governed through the metropolitan state's own institutional structures rather than through separate governing apparatus. The decisive criterion distinguishing Part of Other Country from colonial and occupation regimes is the degree of administrative integration: colonial and occupation regimes maintain separate governing structures (colonial administrations, occupation authorities, separate legal systems) constituting distinct political entities requiring regime classification according to external legitimation patterns, while Part of Other Country involves governance through the metropolitan state's unified institutional framework without separate regime-level apparatus warranting independent classification.

This category addresses a fundamental methodological issue in cross-national regime research. When scholars analyze regime distributions across states (how many democracies exist globally, what percentage of states in a region are autocracies, what is the global trend in democratization), the unit of analysis must be sovereign states to avoid double-counting and maintain valid enumeration. A territory integrated into another state (such as Lithuania within the Soviet Union from 1940-1990, Tibet within the People's Republic of China post-1959, or Newfoundland within Canada after 1949) does not constitute a separate unit for regime enumeration, as only the sovereign state (USSR, PRC, Canada) represents the relevant analytical case for cross-national comparison. Including integrated territories as separate cases would artificially inflate regime counts (counting both USSR and Lithuanian SSR as separate ideocracies, both PRC and Tibet as separate regimes) and distort quantitative analysis of regime distributions, transitions, and trends. A researcher analyzing how many communist regimes existed in 1980 must count the USSR as one case, not sixteen cases (USSR plus fifteen constituent republics), to produce accurate enumeration.

Therefore, Part of Other Country is excluded from Va-PoReg's primary regime classification variables (from `vaporeg_regtype_detailed` to `vaporeg_regtype_binaut`), which are designed for cross-national quantitative analysis requiring accurate sovereign state counts. However, this category is retained in `vaporeg_regtype_reports`, which serves a distinct purpose: documenting

complete historical trajectories for territories that gained or lost sovereignty during the dataset's temporal scope (1900-2024). For territories like Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia, historical documentation of periods under Soviet sovereignty (including specification that they were Part of USSR and that USSR was classified as ideocracy during those periods) provides crucial context for understanding paths toward and away from independence, even though these periods do not constitute separate cases for regime enumeration in quantitative variables. This dual-variable approach resolves the tension between accurate cross-national quantitative analysis (requiring sovereign state units only) and comprehensive historical documentation (requiring complete territorial trajectories including periods without sovereignty). Researchers using classification variables for quantitative analysis obtain correct sovereign state counts, while researchers examining specific countries' historical trajectories through reports variables obtain complete documentation including integration periods.

Operationalization: A territory is classified as Part of Other Country when: (1) it is fully integrated into another sovereign state's political and administrative system, governed through that state's institutions rather than through separate governing structures, (2) it does not possess separate regime-level governance requiring independent legitimation pattern analysis, and (3) it either subsequently gained independence or previously existed as a sovereign entity or remote colony during the dataset's temporal scope (1900-2024), warranting historical trajectory documentation. All three conditions must be satisfied. Territories that never possessed sovereignty and remain integrated throughout the dataset period, or that integrated during the dataset period but never subsequently gained sovereignty, are not coded in `vaporeg_regtype_reports`, as they lack the historical sovereignty transition relevance this documentation serves. The third criterion ensures that coding focuses on territories with sovereignty trajectories (toward or away from independence) rather than on all integrated regions regardless of historical relevance.

The integration criterion distinguishes Part of Other Country from colonial and occupation regimes. Colonial regimes maintain separate colonial administrations with distinct governing structures (governors-general, colonial legislatures, separate legal systems, colonial civil services) constituting political entities requiring regime classification despite external control and lack of sovereignty. Occupation regimes establish separate occupation authorities or permit indigenous governments to function as distinct entities under occupation oversight. Part of Other Country involves governance through the metropolitan state's own institutional structures: the territory functions as a province, region, or constituent unit within the sovereign state's unified administrative system, applying the same legal framework, institutional processes, and bureaucratic hierarchies as other regions of that state, without separate regime-level governance

apparatus. Assessment focuses on whether separate governing structures exist requiring independent regime classification, or whether the territory is governed through integrated metropolitan institutions.

The sovereignty trajectory criterion ensures that only historically relevant cases receive documentation in `vaporeg_regtype_reports`. Territories currently independent that experienced periods under another state's sovereignty (Baltic states under USSR, many African and Asian countries during brief integration periods before or after colonial status) warrant historical documentation of integration phases. Territories that were remote colonies or protectorates and subsequently integrated (Newfoundland joining Canada from prior Dominion status, Sikkim joining India from prior protectorate status) do not receive Part of Other Country coding after integration if they never subsequently gained sovereignty, as their historical trajectory ends with integration rather than continuing through cycles of sovereignty loss and restoration. Only territories with ongoing sovereignty relevance (either currently sovereign having experienced prior integration, or potentially sovereign in future having experienced integration) receive Part of Other Country documentation.

Borderline cases arise when territories possess substantial autonomy while remaining integrated, when the boundary between protectorate-type arrangements and full integration becomes ambiguous, or when contested sovereignty creates classification uncertainty. Territories with autonomous governance structures creating quasi-separate regimes (elected regional governments with extensive powers over domestic policy approaching protectorate-type semi-sovereign characteristics) represent upper borderlines where classification must assess whether autonomy creates separate regime-level governance or remains within integrated administrative framework. Territories with separate administrations but unclear status (such as arrangements transitioning from protectorate-type to full integration) represent borderlines requiring assessment of whether separate governing structures constitute protectorate-type semi-sovereign classification or represent integration. Contested integrations where international recognition is withheld or where integration occurs through force rather than voluntary processes create borderlines requiring assessment of whether territories function as integrated units despite contested status.

Transitions into Part of Other Country status are coded when territories lose sovereignty through integration, annexation, or absorption into another state. Transitions out are coded when territories gain or regain independence, establishing sovereign status requiring regime classification.

Examples:

Paradigmatic Cases: Newfoundland's integration into Canada (1949) and Sikkim's integration into India (1975) exemplify paradigmatic Part of Other Country situations where territories integrated into sovereign states without subsequently regaining independence, resulting in exclusion from `vaporeg_regtype_reports` despite integration occurring within the dataset's temporal scope. Newfoundland, previously a British Dominion with self-governing status (and coded as such when sovereignty existed), joined Canada following referendums in 1948, becoming a Canadian province in 1949. After integration, Newfoundland functioned as a province within Canada's federal system, governed through Canadian federal and provincial institutions without separate regime-level governance. Because Newfoundland has not subsequently gained sovereignty and remains integrated as a Canadian province, it does not receive Part of Other Country coding in `vaporeg_regtype_reports`: its historical trajectory as relevant to sovereignty questions ended with integration, and documenting it as Part of Canada throughout subsequent decades provides no analytical value for understanding sovereignty transitions or regime trajectories. Similarly, Sikkim transitioned from protectorate status (coded as protectorate-type semi-sovereign under Indian protection) to full integration as an Indian state in 1975 following a referendum. Post-1975, Sikkim functions as a state within India's federal system, governed through Indian constitutional structures without separate regime-level governance. Sikkim's lack of subsequent sovereignty trajectory means it is not coded as Part of Other Country in reports variables after 1975, as its relevance to sovereignty analysis ended with integration. These paradigmatic cases illustrate that Part of Other Country coding applies selectively: not all integrated territories receive this designation, but only those with ongoing sovereignty relevance through subsequent independence or current sovereign status having experienced prior integration periods.

Just-inside Cases: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia within the Soviet Union (1940-1990, excluding 1941-1944 German occupation periods) represent contested borderline cases between Part of Other Country and potential alternative classifications, complicated by international non-recognition of Soviet annexation and forced rather than voluntary integration. The Baltic republics functioned as constituent Soviet Socialist Republics within the USSR federal structure, governed through Soviet institutions (Communist Party hierarchies, Soviet governmental structures, centralized planning apparatus) without separate regime-level governance distinguishing them from other Soviet republics. However, many Western states never recognized Soviet annexation as legitimate, maintaining diplomatic recognition of Baltic governments-in-exile and treating the territories as occupied rather than legitimately integrated. This contested status creates classification ambiguity: *de facto* governance structures resembled Part of Other Country

(full integration into USSR administrative system), but contested sovereignty and international non-recognition argue for alternative treatment. Va-PoReg's de facto classification principle prioritizes actual governance structures, leading to Part of Other Country classification based on factual integration into Soviet administration, with the contested nature and subsequent independence restoration (1990-1991) warranting this borderline designation. The Baltic case illuminates tensions between de facto control structures and normative sovereignty claims in integration contexts.

Tibet within the People's Republic of China presents a complex case requiring reassessment of classification boundaries. Following the Seventeen Point Agreement (10/24/1951), Tibet maintained the Dalai Lama's government (Kashag), traditional Tibetan institutions, and control over domestic affairs including justice, religion, and internal administration, while China retained control over foreign affairs, defense, and ultimate sovereignty. This structure closely parallels protectorate-type semi-sovereign arrangements (such as Vichy France under German control or Saarland under French protection) where separate indigenous governments exercise comprehensive domestic authority under external control limited to foreign affairs and security. The preservation of Tibet's existing political system (explicitly guaranteed in Agreement Point 4) and functioning Tibetan governance structures suggest classification as protectorate-type semi-sovereign during 1951-1959 would be more consistent with Va-PoReg's domain threshold criteria than the current Part of Other Country coding. However, Chinese military presence throughout Tibet and interference in some regions (socialist reforms in Kham and Amdo during 1956-1958 violating Agreement provisions, leading to resistance and the Xunhua Incident) create ambiguity about whether Chinese control remained limited to foreign affairs and defense or extended into domestic policy domains. Following the 1959 Tibetan uprising (03/10/1959-03/23/1959), the Dalai Lama's government dissolved with his flight to India, traditional structures were dismantled through Democratic Reforms, and Tibet was progressively integrated into PRC administrative structures as the Tibet Autonomous Region, governed through standard provincial party-state institutions identical to other Chinese provinces. Post-1959 Tibet clearly constitutes Part of Other Country with full administrative integration and no separate regime-level governance. However, the 1951-1959 period represents a borderline between semi-sovereign classification (emphasizing separate Tibetan governance structures maintaining domestic control and Agreement provisions preserving political regime) and Part of Other Country classification (emphasizing Chinese military control, integration rhetoric declaring Tibet „part of Chinese territory,“ and violations of autonomy provisions), with protectorate-type

arguably more consistent with the domain threshold framework applied to comparable cases like Vichy France or Saarland.

French overseas territories with substantial autonomy (such as French Polynesia classified as Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France] from 2003) represent borderlines between Part of Other Country and a semi-sovereign status requiring separate regime classification. French Polynesia possesses elected territorial government with extensive autonomous powers over domestic policy including education, health, and economic development, while France retains control over foreign affairs, defense, and maintains override capacity through French state representative. This autonomy level warranted reclassification from colonial indirect rule to protectorate-type with separate internal regime coding (Electoral Democracy due to French override capacity affecting executive constraints), illustrating that substantial territorial autonomy can create separate regime-level governance requiring protectorate-type classification rather than Part of Other Country treatment. The boundary depends on whether autonomous governance reaches the threshold where distinct legitimation patterns operate with sufficient independence from metropolitan control to constitute separate regime analysis, or whether integration within metropolitan regime structures predominates despite autonomy provisions.

Just-outside Cases: Colonial regimes such as Hawaii under US territorial administration (1900-1959) and Alaska Territory (1912-1959) maintained separate territorial governing structures requiring independent regime classification despite US sovereignty. Hawaii operated through territorial government with appointed governors and elected territorial legislatures, constituting separately governed colonial entities classified as indirect rule colonial regimes rather than as integrated US territory. Hawaii's transition to statehood in 1959 and Alaska's transition in 1959 marked shifts from colonial regime (separate territorial governance) to Part of Other Country (full integration as US states governed through federal-state framework identical to other states), illustrating the boundary between separate colonial administration and full integration. Other US territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, US Virgin Islands) maintaining territorial status with separate governance structures throughout the dataset period receive colonial regime classification rather than Part of Other Country designation. British India and French Algeria during colonial periods similarly maintained separate colonial administrations with governors-general, colonial civil services, and distinct legal frameworks, warranting colonial regime classification rather than treatment as integrated British or French territory.

Independent sovereign states obviously contrast with Part of Other Country through possession of sovereignty requiring independent regime classification. The Baltic states after independence

restoration (1990-1991) transitioned from Part of Other Country (USSR) to sovereign status with independent regime classification, illustrating the boundary between integrated administrative status and sovereign statehood. Numerous African and Asian territories that experienced brief Part of Other Country periods during integration phases subsequently gained independent sovereignty and regime classification, demonstrating transitions across the sovereignty threshold. Saarland's trajectory illustrates complex status transitions: French occupation regime (1945-1949), semi-sovereign (1949-1957) with own government under French control of foreign affairs, then integration into West Germany (1957) transitioning to Part of Other Country status, demonstrating how territories may pass through multiple statuses before final integration.

7. Va-PoReg Core Variables

This section documents all variables that are part of the Va-PoReg dataset. Variables are ordered functionally: from the regime classification at the core of the dataset, through identification and sovereignty variables, to temporal and contextual variables. Section 8 documents external variables incorporated from third-party datasets.

REGIME CLASSIFICATION

Va-PoReg distinguishes political regimes according to a **reports**, **detailed**, and a **compact** version of the classification. The detailed classification is the most fine-grained variant; the compact classification merges related types for research purposes. The reports version corresponds to the detailed classification but additionally includes the category *Part of Other Country* (220), which captures periods when a political entity is subordinate to another sovereign state.

vaporeg_regtype_reports

Regime type according to the country-specific reports classification. This is the most granular classification and includes Part of Other Country (220) in addition to all categories of the detailed classification. Coded as of July 1 each year.

Value	Label
10	Liberal Democracy
20	Electoral Democracy
30	Electoral Oligarchy
40	Democratizing Regime
50	Electoral Hybrid Regime
60	Electoral Autocracy
70	Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy
80	Non-Electoral Transitional Regime
90	Constitutional Monarchy
100	Autocratic Monarchy
110	One-Party Autocracy
120	Right-Wing Autocracy
130	Communist Ideocracy
140	Islamist Ideocracy
150	Military Autocracy
160	Personalist Autocracy

Value	Label
170	Direct Rule Colonial Regime
180	Indirect Rule Colonial Regime
190	Direct Rule Occupation Regime
200	Indirect Rule Occupation Regime
210	No Central Authority
220	Part of Other Country

vaporeg_regtype_detailed

Regime type according to the detailed classification. The most fine-grained standardized variant, identical to the reports classification except that Part of Other Country is not included. Coded as of July 1 each year.

Value	Label
10	Liberal Democracy
20	Electoral Democracy
30	Electoral Oligarchy
40	Democratizing Regime
50	Electoral Hybrid Regime
60	Electoral Autocracy
70	Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy
80	Non-Electoral Transitional Regime
90	Constitutional Monarchy
100	Autocratic Monarchy
110	One-Party Autocracy
120	Right-Wing Autocracy
130	Communist Ideocracy
140	Islamist Ideocracy
150	Military Autocracy
160	Personalist Autocracy
170	Direct Rule Colonial Regime
180	Indirect Rule Colonial Regime
190	Direct Rule Occupation Regime

Value	Label
200	Indirect Rule Occupation Regime
210	No Central Authority

vaporeg_regtype_compact

Regime type according to the compact classification. Merges closely related regime types into broader categories, resulting in fewer, more general categories suitable for large-N analysis. Coded as of July 1 each year.

Value	Label
10	Democracy <i>Encompasses: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy</i>
20	Electoral and Liberal Hybrid Regime <i>Encompasses: Electoral Oligarchy, Electoral Hybrid Regime</i>
30	Provisional Regime <i>Encompasses: Democratizing Regime, Non-Electoral Transitional Regime</i>
40	Electoral Autocracy <i>Encompasses: Electoral Autocracy, Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy</i>
50	Ruling Monarchy <i>Encompasses: Autocratic Monarchy, Constitutional Monarchy</i>
60	One-Party Autocracy
70	Right-Wing Autocracy
80	Communist Ideocracy
90	Islamist Ideocracy
100	Military Autocracy
110	Personalist Autocracy
120	Colonial Regime <i>Encompasses: Direct Rule Colonial Regime, Indirect Rule Colonial Regime</i>
130	Occupation Regime <i>Encompasses: Direct Rule Occupation Regime, Indirect Rule Occupation Regime</i>
140	No Central Authority

vaporeg_regtype_quadruple

Fourfold typology of political regimes, distinguishing democracy, hybrid regime, electoral autocracy, and closed autocracy. Designed to facilitate broad cross-national and longitudinal comparisons. While structurally similar to V-Dem's fourfold regime classification, boundaries between categories are deliberately drawn differently to

reflect Va-PoReg's conceptual distinctions. Cases coded as No Central Authority or Part of Other Country are assigned missing values.

Value	Label
1	Democracy: Encompasses: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy
2	Hybrid Regime: Encompasses: Electoral Oligarchy, Democratizing Regime, Electoral Hybrid Regime, Constitutional Monarchy
3	Electoral Autocracy: Encompasses: Electoral Autocracy, Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy
4	Closed Autocracy: Encompasses all non-electoral autocracy types

vaporeg_regtype_triple

Threefold typology distinguishing democracy, hybrid regime, and autocracy. Merges electoral and closed autocracies into a single autocracy category. Cases coded as No Central Authority or Part of Other Country are assigned missing values.

Value	Label
1	Democracy: Encompasses: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy
2	Hybrid Regime: Encompasses: Electoral Oligarchy, Democratizing Regime, Electoral Hybrid Regime, Constitutional Monarchy
3	Autocracy: Encompasses: Electoral Autocracy and all forms of non-electoral autocracy, including colonial and occupation regimes

vaporeg_regtype_bindem

Binary democracy classification. Classifies all regimes as democracy (1) or non-democracy (0). Hybrid regimes are coded as non-democracy (0), reflecting their institutional deficits relative to full democratic standards. Cases coded as No Central Authority are included as non-democracy (0); cases coded as Part of Other Country are assigned missing values.

Value	Label
1	Democracy: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy
0	Non-democracy: All remaining regime types, including hybrid regimes and No Central Authority

vaporeg_regtype_binaut

Binary autocracy classification. Classifies regimes as autocracy (1) or non-autocracy (0). Hybrid regimes are coded as non-autocracy (0). Cases coded as No Central Authority or Part of Other Country are assigned missing values.

Value	Label
1	Autocracy: Electoral Autocracy, Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy, Non-Electoral Transitional Regime, all monarchies, one-party, right-wing, communist, islamist, military, personalist autocracies, colonial and occupation regimes
0	Non-autocracy: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Oligarchy, Democratizing Regime, Electoral Hybrid Regime, Constitutional Monarchy

Note on missing values: Cases coded as Part of Other Country are assigned missing values in both binary classifications. Cases coded as No Central Authority are assigned missing values in the binary autocracy classification (vaporeg_regtype_binaut), as the absence of a functioning government precludes autocratic rule. In the binary democracy classification (vaporeg_regtype_bindem), No Central Authority is coded as non-democracy (0), since the absence of central authority is incompatible with democratic governance.

vaporeg_dpa_country

For colonial regimes, occupation regimes, and territories that are part of another country, this variable specifies the dominant political authority: i.e., the colonizing, occupying, or governing state.

vaporeg_dpa_regdetailed

Regime type of the dominant political authority for colonial regimes, occupation regimes, and territories under another country, according to the detailed classification (vaporeg_regtype_detailed).

vaporeg_dpa_regcompact

Regime type of the dominant political authority for colonial regimes, occupation regimes, and territories under foreign control, according to the compact classification (vaporeg_regtype_compact).

vaporeg_monarchy

Differentiates between autocratic, constitutional, and ceremonial monarchies, and identifies all non-monarchical regimes as republics. For colonial and occupation regimes, the 'Governed by' categories indicate whether the colonizing or occupying power was a monarchy (and which type) or a republic, enabling direct analysis of monarchical vs. republican colonial rule without cross-referencing metropole data.

Value	Label
10	Autocratic Monarchy

Value	Label
20	Governed by Autocratic Monarchy
30	Constitutional Monarchy
40	Governed by Constitutional Monarchy
50	Ceremonial Monarchy
60	Governed by Ceremonial Monarchy
70	Republic
80	Governed by Republic

vaporeg_rwa_subtype

Specifies subtypes of Right-Wing Autocracy as defined in the detailed regime classification (vaporeg_regtype_detailed). All non-right-wing-autocracy observations are coded 0.

Value	Label
0	Not applicable
1	Fascist
2	Corporatist
3	Racist

Table 1 shows how the detailed classification aggregates into the compact, quadruple, and triple variants. The binary columns show bindem / binaut values (0 = non-democracy or non-autocracy; 1 = democracy or autocracy; . = missing).

Table 1: Aggregation of Va-PoReg Regime Types Across Classification Variants

Detailed Classification (vaporeg_regtype_detailed)	Quadruple (vaporeg_regtype_quadruple)	Triple (vaporeg_regtype_triple)	Binary (bindem / binaut)
10 Liberal Democracy	1 Democracy	1 Democracy	1 / 0
20 Electoral Democracy	1 Democracy	1 Democracy	1 / 0
30 Electoral Oligarchy	2 Hybrid Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	0 / 0
40 Democratizing Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	0 / 0
50 Electoral Hybrid Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	0 / 0
60 Electoral Autocracy	3 Electoral Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1

Detailed Classification (va-poreg_regtype_detailed)	Quadruple (va-poreg_regtype_quadru-ple)	Triple (va-poreg_regtype_triple)	Binary (bindem / binaut)
70 Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy	3 Electoral Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
80 Non-Electoral Transitional	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
90 Constitutional Monarchy	2 Hybrid Regime	2 Hybrid Regime	0 / 0
100 Autocratic Monarchy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
110 One-Party Autocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
120 Right-Wing Autocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
130 Communist Ideocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
140 Islamist Ideocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
150 Military Autocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
160 Personalist Autocracy	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
170 Direct Rule Colonial Regime	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
180 Indirect Rule Colonial Regime	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
190 Direct Rule Occupation Regime	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
200 Indirect Rule Occupation Regime	4 Closed Autocracy	3 Autocracy	0 / 1
210 No Central Authority	Missing	Missing	0 / .

The compact classification uses the label 'Electoral and Liberal Hybrid Regime' to signal the conceptual breadth of this category. In the quadruple and triple classifications, Constitutional Monarchy joins this group, warranting the more generic label 'Hybrid Regime.' Researchers analyzing autocratic diversity or legitimation patterns should use the detailed or compact classification. Those requiring compatibility with V-Dem's fourfold scheme should use the quadruple classification. For colonial and occupation regimes, the dominant political authority variables (va-poreg_dpa_regdetailed, vaporeg_dpa_regcompact) record the regime type of the governing power.

IDENTIFICATION VARIABLES

country_name

Name of the political entity as used in Va-PoReg. Includes both current states and historical entities (e.g., Ottoman Empire, Yugoslavia, Germany – East). A full list of included entities is provided in the appendix.

year

Calendar year of the observation. Coverage: 1900–2025.

vaporeg_identifier

Unique numerical identifier for all political entities in the dataset. Based on Correlates of War (COW) country codes, supplemented with additional codes for entities not covered by COW (e.g., Sikkim, Tibet).

cow_identifier

Correlates of War (COW) country code. Assigns a specific numerical identifier to each country, facilitating consistent identification across COW-based datasets and cross-dataset comparisons.

geonames_identifier

geoNames identifier provides a unique numerical ID for each geographical entity, enabling precise geolocation and cross-dataset integration. Associated attributes include name, latitude, longitude, and administrative division.

SOVEREIGNTY AND REGIME STATUS VARIABLES**vaporeg_sovereignty**

Sovereignty status of the country-year observation.

Conceptualization

Sovereignty in Va-PoReg is understood as an **external-relational** concept: it measures whether a political entity exercises effective authority over its territory and government without being subordinate to another state or occupying power. Sovereignty is distinct from state capacity or internal stability — a state experiencing civil war or severe institutional weakness may still be coded as sovereign, provided no external power exercises control over its governance. Equally, formal international recognition alone does not determine the coding; what matters is the *de facto* distribution of authority.

The variable captures three distinct states along a **domain-based continuum**. The decisive criterion is whether external control extends into domestic policy domains or remains confined to foreign affairs and defense. Sovereign entities control both internal and external domains. Semi-sovereign entities retain genuine autonomous authority over all domestic policy domains but delegate or submit to external control over foreign affairs and defense — they fall *outside* the external legitimation pattern as defined in section 6.6, since the external power has no veto capacity over internal governance. Not sovereign entities are subject to external control that extends into domestic policy domains, encompassing colonial regimes, occupation regimes, and entities forming part of another country.

Sovereignty constitutes an **orthogonal dimension** to the regime classification. A political entity can be an electoral autocracy under full sovereignty or under no sovereignty. This orthogonality allows researchers to separate questions about *how* a polity is governed from questions about *whether* it governs itself. The variable works in conjunction with the dominant political authority variables (`vaporeg_dpa_country`, `vaporeg_dpa_regdetailed`, `vaporeg_dpa_regcompact`), which together operationalize a relational concept of political authority: not only what regime type a territory has, but who actually exercises authority over it.

Operationalization

Classification follows the **domain threshold** principle. The decisive question is whether external control extends beyond foreign affairs and defense into any domestic policy domain. If external control is confined exclusively to foreign affairs and defense without veto capacity over internal matters, the entity is coded as **semi-sovereign (2)**. If external control extends into domestic policy domains, the entity is coded as **not sovereign (3)**. If the entity exercises full control over both internal and external domains, it is coded as **sovereign (1)**. Domestic instability, civil war, or limited state capacity do not qualify a country-year for semi-sovereign or not sovereign status — these are internal capacity deficits, not external authority relationships.

An important coding rule concerns the relationship between sovereignty status and regime classification: a country-year may be formally classified as a colonial regime, occupation regime, or part of another country in the regime type variables, while being coded as **semi-sovereign (2)** in `vaporeg_sovereignty` if de facto the external power's control is limited to foreign affairs and defense and genuine domestic autonomy is exercised. The sovereignty variable thus captures the factual distribution of authority independently of the formal regime label. The threshold between semi-sovereign and not sovereign follows the same domain logic as the distinction between indirect rule and semi-sovereign entities in section 6.6: the decisive question is whether the external power retains control over or veto capacity in any domestic policy sphere beyond foreign affairs and defense.

Value	Label	Description
1	Sovereign	The country exercises full authority over both domestic governance and foreign affairs and defense. No external power holds control over any domain of governance.
2	Semi-sovereign	The country exercises genuine autonomous authority over all domestic policy domains, but foreign affairs and defense are controlled by or delegated to an external power without veto capacity over internal matters. Semi-sovereign entities fall outside the external legitimation pattern (section 6.6). Note: a country-year may be formally classified as a colonial or occupation regime while being coded as semi-sovereign if de facto domestic autonomy is exercised.
3	Not sovereign	External authority extends beyond foreign affairs and defense into domestic policy domains. Includes colonial regimes, occupation regimes, and entities coded as Part of Other Country.

Examples

Paradigmatic sovereign: France (1900–1939) exercises full sovereign authority over both domestic governance and foreign affairs. No external power holds control over any policy domain.

Paradigmatic semi-sovereign: Bhutan (1910–1947) under the Treaty of Punakha delegated control over foreign affairs to British India while retaining full internal governance autonomy. The British exercised no authority over domestic policy, placing Bhutan outside the external legitimation pattern despite formal subordination in the external domain.

Paradigmatic not sovereign: German-occupied Poland (1939–1945) under the Generalgouvernement. External authority extended comprehensively into all domestic policy domains; no indigenous institution exercised genuine autonomous governance.

Just-inside semi-sovereign / just-outside not sovereign: Vichy France (1940–1942) retained comprehensive control over domestic policy domains including justice, internal security, economic administration, and fiscal policy in the unoccupied zone. German control was concentrated in the occupied zone and exercised primarily through strategic and military channels rather than through direct domestic administration. This positions Vichy at the upper boundary of not sovereign, approaching semi-sovereign status. After Operation Anton (November 1942), when Germany occupied the entire French territory, the case moves clearly into not sovereign.

The DPA variables (`vaporeg_dpa_country`, `vaporeg_dpa_regdetailed`, `vaporeg_dpa_regcompact`) record the identity and regime type of the external authority for all country-years coded as not sovereign (3). Together with `vaporeg_sovereignty`, they enable systematic analysis of who governs non-sovereign territories and under what regime type.

TEMPORAL VARIABLES

Va-PoReg records regime start dates, end dates, change indicators, and duration for each classification variant. All variables follow the same logic: regime phases are tracked as of July 1 each year. The `_reports` variants additionally cover non-sovereign phases (colonial rule, occupation, part of other country) as distinct regime phases.

`vaporeg_regstart_reports`

The date on which the political regime phase, according to the country-specific regime reports, began. Includes both sovereign and non-sovereign phases (colonial rule, occupation, part of other country).

`vaporeg_regend_reports`

The date on which the political regime phase, as defined by the country-specific regime reports, ended. Includes both sovereign and non-sovereign phases.

`vaporeg_regchange_reports`

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime phase is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, including transitions between sovereign and non-sovereign phases. Value 0 indicates no change.

`vaporeg_regduration_reports`

Number of years the political regime phase has lasted, as defined by the country-specific regime reports, counting only if the regime phase was in place on July 1 of each year. Includes both sovereign and non-sovereign phases.

`vaporeg_regstart_detailed`

The date on which the political regime type, according to the detailed classification, began.

`vaporeg_regend_detailed`

The date on which the political regime type, as defined by the detailed classification, ended.

vaporeg_regchange_detailed

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the detailed classification.

vaporeg_regduration_detailed

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the detailed classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

vaporeg_regstart_compact

The date on which the political regime type, according to the compact classification, began.

vaporeg_regend_compact

The date on which the political regime type, as defined by the compact classification, ended.

vaporeg_regchange_compact

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the compact classification.

vaporeg_regduration_compact

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the compact classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

vaporeg_regchange_quadruple

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the quadruple classification.

vaporeg_regduration_quadruple

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the quadruple classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

vaporeg_regchange_triple

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the triple classification.

vaporeg_regduration_triple

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the triple classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

vaporeg_regchange_binaut

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the binary autocracy classification.

vaporeg_regduration_binaut

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the binary autocracy classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

vaporeg_regchange_bindem

Takes a value of 1 if a different regime is in place on July 1 compared to July 1 of the previous year, based on the binary democracy classification.

vaporeg_regduration_bindem

Number of years the political regime has lasted, as defined by the binary democracy classification, counting only if the regime was in place on July 1 of each year.

CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES**vaporeg_continent**

Classifies each political entity by continent according to the United Nations Statistics Division UN geoscheme.

Value	Label
1	Africa
2	Americas
3	Asia
4	Europe
5	Oceania

vaporeg_region

Classifies each political entity by region according to the United Nations Statistics Division UN geoscheme.

Value	Label
1	Australia and New Zealand
2	Caribbean
3	Central America

Value	Label
4	Central Asia
5	Eastern Africa
6	Eastern Asia
7	Eastern Europe
8	Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia
9	Middle Africa
10	Northern Africa
11	Northern America
12	Northern Europe
13	South America
14	South-Eastern Asia
15	Southern Africa
16	Southern Asia
17	Southern Europe
18	Western Africa
19	Western Asia
20	Western Europe

vaporeg_population

Population of the political entity, derived from Gapminder and UN datasets. Countries coded as Part of Other Country are excluded from this variable. For full transparency on data manipulations, see the Va-PoReg data manipulations document.

vaporeg_population_sources

Source description for vaporeg_population, indicating which values were taken directly from source datasets and which were adjusted.

Value	Label
1	Modified based on Gapminder
2	Modified based on UN data

Value	Label
3	UN data (unmodified)
4	Gapminder data (unmodified)

UN_pop_partothercountry

UN population data exclusively for countries coded as Part of Other Country. Provided separately to enable population-weighted analyses that include these entities.

gapminder_pop_partothercountry

Gapminder population data exclusively for countries coded as Part of Other Country. Provided separately to enable population-weighted analyses that include these entities.

8. External Core Variables

This section documents variables incorporated from third-party datasets. These variables serve as auxiliary indicators in the Va-PoReg coding process, providing empirical reference points for key dimensions such as political liberties, electoral quality, and executive constraints. They are not original Va-PoReg codings. Where original variable scales have been recoded or relabeled, this is explicitly noted in the variable description.

V-DEM VARIABLES

The following variables are adapted from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset. V-Dem provides continuous index scores; Va-PoReg uses V-Dem's own **5C categorization** (a five-level interval classification provided by V-Dem alongside their continuous indices) and assigns interpretive labels to each category. These labeled variables are **not original V-Dem variables** but Va-PoReg recodings based on V-Dem's own categorization thresholds. Researchers requiring the original continuous scores should consult the V-Dem dataset directly.

V-Dem LCE

Adapted from V-Dem's `e_v2xlg_legcon`. Measures the capacity of the legislature and government agencies (e.g., comptroller general, general prosecutor, ombudsman) to question, investigate, and exercise oversight over the executive. Va-PoReg applies V-Dem's 5C categorization thresholds and assigns the following labels:

Value	Label
0.00	Absent
0.25	Limited
0.50	Moderate
0.75	Robust
1.00	Comprehensive

V-Dem JCE

Adapted from V-Dem's `e_v2x_jucon`. Measures the extent to which the executive respects the constitution and complies with court rulings, and the degree to which the judiciary acts independently. Va-PoReg applies V-Dem's 5C categorization thresholds and assigns the following labels:

Value	Label
0.00	Absent
0.25	Limited

Value	Label
0.50	Moderate
0.75	Robust
1.00	Comprehensive

vdem_PCLI

Adapted from V-Dem's Political Civil Liberties Index. Measures the extent to which individuals and groups enjoy fundamental political and civil liberties, on a scale from 0 (no liberties) to 1 (full protection). Va-PoReg applies V-Dem's 5C categorization thresholds and assigns the following labels:

Value	Label
0.00	None
0.25	Not really
0.50	Ambiguous
0.75	Somewhat
1.00	Yes

vdem_EFFI

Adapted from V-Dem's Election Free and Fair Index. Assesses whether national elections were free and fair, considering the pre-election period, election day, and the post-election process. Va-PoReg applies V-Dem's categorization and assigns the following labels:

Value	Label
0	None
1	Not really
2	Ambiguous
3	Somewhat
4	Yes

vdem_CEI

Adapted from V-Dem's Clean Election Index. Measures the extent to which elections are free from registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition,

vote buying, and election violence. Va-PoReg applies V-Dem's 5C categorization thresholds and assigns the following labels:

Value	Label
0.00	None
0.25	Not really
0.50	Ambiguous
0.75	Somewhat
1.00	Yes

In the country reports, V-Dem's Legislative Constraints on the Executive Index is referred to as V-Dem LCE, and the Judicial Constraints on the Executive Index as V-Dem JCE. See the List of Abbreviations for the full list of acronyms used.

POLITY5 VARIABLES

polity5_xconst

From the Polity5 dataset. Measures institutional constraints on executive authority, ranging from 1 (unlimited executive power) to 7 (strong executive constraints). This is an original Polity5 variable; Va-PoReg includes it without recoding.

Value	Label
1	Unlimited authority: No formal restrictions on executive power aside from irregular threats (e.g., coups)
2	Intermediate category (unlimited to slight limitations)
3	Slight to moderate limitations: Some real but limited constraints exist
4	Intermediate category (moderate to substantial limitations)
5	Substantial limitations: Executive has more power than accountability groups but faces significant checks
6	Intermediate category (substantial limitations to executive parity)
7	Executive parity or subordination: Accountability groups have equal or greater authority than the executive

LIED VARIABLES

The following variables are taken from the Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED). All four variables are binary indicators. They are included without recoding.

lied_executive_elections

Indicates whether the chief executive is elected directly or indirectly (i.e., selected by elected representatives), or is accountable to an elected parliament when not directly elected.

Value	Label
1	Present
0	Absent

lied_legislative_elections

Indicates whether a legislative body enacts at least some laws, does not perform executive functions, and has its lower house at least partially elected. The legislature must remain operational.

Value	Label
1	Present
0	Absent

lied_multiparty_legislative_elec

Indicates whether the lower house of the legislature is elected by voters who have more than one choice, either through multiple competing parties including opposition parties, or through candidates representing distinct political positions without party labels.

Value	Label
1	Present
0	Absent

lied_political_liberties

Indicates whether political liberties are respected, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association, and whether all groups that are not openly anti-democratic are allowed to organize and assemble freely.

Value	Label
1	Present
0	Absent

FREEDOM HOUSE VARIABLES

fh_total

A Va-PoReg recoding of Freedom House's annual assessments of Political Rights (1-7) and Civil Liberties (1-7). Both dimensions are summed to create a scale from 2 (most free) to 14 (least free). This is **not an original Freedom House variable** but a Va-PoReg construction based on Freedom House data. Va-PoReg applies the following interpretation, which differs from Freedom House's own three-category classification:

Value	Label
2-4	Free: broadly consistent with liberal democracy
5-7	Rather free: broadly consistent with electoral democracy
8-10	Rather not free: broadly consistent with electoral hybrid regime
11-14	Not free: broadly consistent with electoral autocracy

Note on temporal coverage: Freedom House's Freedom in the World dataset uses December 31 as its cut-off date in its current version. All Va-PoReg codings use a uniform cut-off date of July 1. Researchers should be aware of this discrepancy when comparing Va-PoReg variables with Freedom House data.

9. Sources for the Coding of Variables in the Va-PoReg Dataset

In developing our comprehensive dataset, we embarked on an ambitious journey akin to standing on the shoulders of giants, drawing inspiration from the monumental efforts of our predecessors. However, a more apt metaphor might be that of an industrious anthill, where countless tiny yet significant contributions have collectively formed a robust and intricate structure. Our dataset's coding is meticulously crafted, anchored in a thorough examination of both the research literature and a wealth of online resources about various countries. In doing so, we not only provide by far the most extensive collection of country reports ever assembled for a political regime dataset but also build upon earlier documentation efforts. Particularly valuable for cross-checking facts and ensuring consistency were the country reports produced by Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz on autocracies from 1945 to 2014, the country reports of the CHISOL dataset, and the work of Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way on revolutionary regimes. These resources, alongside our own documentation, enabled systematic validation of coding decisions across a wide temporal and geographical scope.

Furthermore, we integrated insights from renowned sources like Freedom House, Polity, and the Bertelsmann Index country reports, enhancing our understanding of political regimes. Our dataset also benefits enormously from the datasets of many esteemed colleagues, particularly those focusing on political regimes. The incorporation of variables from datasets like CHISOLS (Change in Source of Leader Support) (Mattes/Leeds/Matsumura 2016), Freedom House, LIED (Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy) (Skaaning/Gerring/Bartucevicius 2014), Polity IV, and V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) (Coppedge et al. 2020) was instrumental in coding essential information. This integration, however, was not without challenges, as we occasionally encountered discrepancies between these datasets and the information gleaned from academic literature.

We emphasize the utmost transparency in our coding process, ensuring that users can trace the rationale behind each coding decision. This is particularly crucial for understanding the nuances in borderline cases between different categories, all of which are meticulously documented in our regime narrative files. These three files are treasure troves of sources, encompassing all references that informed our coding.

We owe a special acknowledgment to a particular series of volumes on global elections organized by Dieter Nohlen (Nohlen/Krennerich/Thibaut 1999, Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001a, Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001b, Nohlen 2005a, Nohlen 2005b, Nohlen/Stöver 2010), which

were instrumental in cross-verifying our data on legislative and executive elections. The ongoing digital updates of these volumes would significantly benefit future research. From May 1999 to March 2022 Psephos¹, Adam Carr's election archive, was the largest, most comprehensive and most up-to-date archive of electoral information in the world. It is a great loss for science that this archive is no longer being updated.¹ Interestingly, we found Wikipedia's² election result data to be exceptionally reliable, meriting more recognition as a valid academic resource.

As can easily be seen in our comprehensive country reports, we have consulted extensively articles in Wikipedia² and Encyclopædia Britannica.² Wikipedia has its own system of checks and balances, including a community of volunteer editors who monitor changes and correct errors. However, the quality can vary significantly from one article to another, depending on the vigilance of these volunteers. It should be noted that we have the basic rule that a fact should be confirmed by at least two sources. Therefore, Wikipedia in particular is never the only source on which the presentation is based. The Encyclopædia Britannica is renowned for its high-quality content and is often regarded as one of the most reliable and authoritative sources of general knowledge. The Encyclopædia Britannica, in its 15th edition, consists of 32 volumes. The text of the English Wikipedia alone is as of the end of July 2024 equivalent to 3.493 volumes of Encyclopædia Britannica. In view of this difference in quantity, Wikipedia addresses numerous topics in their own articles that are not covered in Encyclopædia Britannica, or only in passing.

One of the standout features of our dataset is its historical depth. While data richness post-World War II is fairly common, datasets such as AF, Polity, LIED, and V-Dem are rare gems that provide insights into much earlier periods. This historical breadth was invaluable in enriching our research and enabling nuanced comparisons with our findings.

¹ <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/>

² <https://www.wikipedia.org/>; <https://www.britannica.com/>

10. Data Maintenance and Updates

Va-PoReg is continuously updated on an annual basis. Each year, we update the dataset to reflect regime changes, state dissolutions, new state formations, and major shifts in sovereignty status through July 1st of the corresponding year. The primary aim of the updating process is to capture and classify all relevant changes in accordance with the conceptual framework and coding principles established in this codebook.

Beyond regime updates, Va-PoReg is systematically expanded to deepen its analytical scope. New variables are continuously developed to enhance the ability to capture the complexity and diversity of political regimes across historical periods and world regions. In addition, the information basis for existing variables is continuously refined to increase the precision, reliability, and validity of regime codings. All extensions and improvements are transparently documented in the updated versions of the codebook and the associated country reports.

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