

Power and Legitimacy – Challenges from Russia

**Edited by
Per-Arne Bodin, Stefan Hedlund
and Elena Namli**

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7 Power and society in Russia

A value approach to legitimacy

Ruben Apressyan

Among a whole variety of issues that are discussed in the literature regarding the legitimacy of power, three seem to dominate, namely: a) the consent of the people to the existing government as the nature of legitimacy; b) some kind of criteria according to which this consent to the government is expressed; and c) the means by which legitimacy is obtained. The question before us concerns whether these are just issues selected from current discussions, whether they are different aspects of the very phenomenon of legitimacy, perhaps different research approaches or even different theories as such? It seems that all of these interpretations might be plausible. Yet, given that they reflect different aspects of the phenomenon, different theoretical approaches, or different conceptions, one should be sensitive to methodological differences distinguishing these issues.

Considering the issues at hand as aspects of legitimacy, one should take into account that they correlate with well-known theories of legitimacy. That of people's consent to the government appears in John Locke's theory, as well as in some aspects of Max Weber's. What I identified as criteria, or a basis of consent, correlates with conceptions proposed by David Beetham and Peter Stillman, and the idea of the means of legitimation with Max Weber's theory.

Further, it should be noted that I analyse these aspects, remembering the authors who elaborated them conceptually, and refer to and follow them, although I am fully aware of my own responsibility for the theoretical synthesis I propose in this chapter.

John Locke and Max Weber

Two of the recognized philosophers of social thought – John Locke and Max Weber – are mentioned in almost all works dealing with the problems of legitimacy and legitimation of power. Their conceptions are different, but not in the sense that Locke's conception is latent, for the very idea of legitimacy has no terminological expression in it.¹ Weber, in contrast, suggested the very notion of legitimacy to characterize political power and public order. Locke and Weber in consequence proposed different approaches with respect to this

phenomenon. According to Locke, legitimacy characterizes the government in the eyes of society, and according to Weber it characterizes the government itself, the ways it implements itself, a form through which power presents itself to society.

Two of Locke's statements deserve particular attention: first, a ruler's power (Locke is referring to King William III of England) is confirmed by 'the Consent of the People, which being the only one of all lawful Governments';² second, the acts of political power are justified by their direction towards public good.³ Obviously, the separation of legality and legitimacy is not apparent to Locke. In his first thesis, he talks about the basis of the legality of government. He still does not consider the possibility of achieving public good through illegal government, namely legitimacy under illegality. But the criteria he selected – the consent of the people⁴ and the public good – are really important, especially for the consideration of legitimacy in terms of ethics.⁵

The emphasis on the differences between legitimacy and legality has become commonplace in literature. Although this difference can already be considered obvious in theory, its repetition and varied emphasis is still reasonable, since one can rather often discover the confusion of legality and legitimacy, explicit or implicit, in empirical, applied and case studies. Meanwhile, in the literature, specifically in the field of law, legitimacy is often treated as just a socio-psychological feature of power order. Thus the consent/dissent of the people is interpreted as a more or less situational expression of *public opinion*. The value foundations of the opinion are left in the background with such an approach. Meanwhile, Locke's words, that the consent of the people is the *only basis* of any lawful government, suggest that we should speak not just about public opinion, but about somehow justified and objectivized public opinion associated with particular public institutions.

Unlike Locke, Weber speaks of 'the belief in the legitimacy' of domination.⁶ Some commentators argue that Weber's legitimacy is not so much a feature of the social system as it is the attitude of citizens to the system as such, which is expressed in their faith.⁷ This observation deserves attention. Yet it is hard not to see that even though Weber does not suggest a clear definition of legitimacy, he considers the belief in it to be primarily influenced by domination and ultimately stresses obedience of various kinds depending on the tactics of legitimization used by the power holders in order to obtain the obedience of the people and thus become legitimized.

This does not mean that Weber underestimates the people's consent to domination or its recognition. Explaining the types of legitimacy – *rational*, *traditional* and *charismatic* – by describing various types of domination, Weber in fact points to a variety of possible 'reasons' for agreement and, therefore, obedience, determined by the existing social order and accepted ways of governance. The factors of legitimation of government based on law and rationality, the sanctity of tradition or belief in the personality of the

ruler are substantially different; but this should not be a ground for doubts about the quality of legitimacy of a particular society.

Deeper reflection on the Weberian conception of legitimacy implies consideration of the difference between legitimacy and legitimation. The distinction seems to be evident. *Legitimacy*, as pointed out above, is a characteristic of power and its institutions with regard to the compatibility of their outputs to public attitudes and expectations. *Legitimation* is an activity aimed at acquiring legitimacy which is undertaken by the authorities themselves. Since the authorities are interested in obtaining and enhancing legitimacy as such, they can seek to ensure it by all possible means. Different types of government authorities may implement different strategies of legitimation. Despotic rulers expect recognition of legitimacy from a rather narrow circle of individuals and groups, namely, from other rulers, whose significance they recognize, from the elites of their country, if they still exist, from other countries if necessary, and even from the people of their own country, albeit by fairly uncertain representation of the latter. Bureaucratic regimes need legitimation not only from the elites, but also from the bureaucracy. Populist power seeks legitimacy from the people represented by its various groups.⁸ Authoritative rulers imagine legitimacy to be the aim of legitimation efforts precisely in the form of *loyalty* to national and local elites, interest groups or citizens, their appreciation of the rulers and the course they steer, publicly demonstrated support and affection, but also in the form of recognition and disposition of the leaders of other countries. Therefore, legitimation is achieved mainly by means of direct propaganda, PR techniques and manipulation of public opinion. Hence it is clear that legitimation as a value phenomenon is trivial and not so attractive for value analysis; but the attitudes of rulers concerned about their legitimacy and striving to maintain it are certainly different.

Legitimacy is not the only condition of power and not the only factor of subordination. According to Weber, obedience may result either from force of habit, material interest, emotional commitment or ideal motivation. In this context, Weber does not mean citizens' obedience under coercion. But what is important is the voluntariness that legitimacy indicates. Legitimacy is a moral feature of the government and in this capacity it directly corresponds with Locke's 'consent of the people'. Voluntariness (obedience) or 'the consent of the people' is an essential criterion insofar as it cautions against the assumption that legitimacy may be obtained either through conviction, or through the use of violence.⁹ With this assumption, legitimacy and power are likely to be confused. Voluntary consent is a mode of exercising power, but not legitimation. Another mode is coercion, which does not require any consent. Political power can either count on the solidarity of the people or ignore their unwillingness to collaborate and continue to act against their dissent. The concept of legitimacy is needed for the identification of different political orders and ways of governance. If some of them do not receive the people's consent, they may be condemned as morally irrelevant.

It is accepted that Locke speaks about the standards of legitimacy, while Weber speaks of the socio-political conditions of legitimacy and the means of its acquisition. Therefore the Lockean approach is considered to be normative and the Weberian approach empirical. This is not exactly so. It is enough to look at some chapters of the *Second Treatise on Government* to realize that Locke was not only building a general political theory, but also discussing, at the level of political experience of his time, the conditions and means of obtaining legitimacy (also considering his own work as a contribution to the cause of legitimation of King William's power). And Weber introduces legitimate domination in a form of 'pure types'. This is a kind of ideal representation, which does not set up a normative standard, but certainly presents a value model.

Such understanding of Locke and Weber makes it possible and reasonable to consider conceptions of legitimacy proposed by Locke and Weber as mutually complementary. This allows us to treat legitimacy as a subject of competition between the state and society. Competitiveness is peculiar to the relationships within both society and the state: within society – as long as it consists of a fairly broad variety of interest groups and passions; within the state – as long as power, if it is not absolute and not reduced to a single *vertical*, exists not only in the form of various agencies and services, but sometimes in different personages. However, as competition is made up of confrontation and agreement, so legitimacy appears to result in confrontation and agreement between the state and the society.

From this point of view, seeking to understand particular images of the legitimacy of power and their relevance to the political and social experience of individuals it might be interesting to look at evidence from public opinion polls in Russia regarding different aspects of political, public and private issues.

Evidence from Russian public opinion polls

In mid-March 2011, the Russian media were thrown into a flutter by news provided independently by different polling centres: during the first three months of the year, the index of approval for the members of the duumvirate, President Medvedev and Premier Putin had significantly decreased and reached a record low for the previous two-year level. According to the Levada-Center, the number of those who approved Dmitry Medvedev as president dropped by 9 per cent, and the number approving Vladimir Putin as premier by 10 per cent.¹⁰

In spite of the drop, the results were quite high – 66 per cent for Medvedev and 69 per cent for Putin, compared to stable averages for the whole of 2010 of 74 per cent for Medvedev and 78 per cent for Putin – they were visibly low in comparative value. With regard to the government and governors, the decrease in the level of approval was also evident, though in this case the difference in figures was not so striking: from an average level of approval of the government of 54 per cent and governors of 55 per cent in 2010 to 48 and

49 per cent respectively in March 2011.¹¹ The difference in levels of approval for the Head of Government and the government itself – 20 per cent during 2010 and 19 per cent in March 2011 is noteworthy. Similar changes occurred with the citizens' rating of the ruling party 'United Russia' and of both houses of parliament.

The overall picture was complemented by the progressive dynamics of remonstrative moods. At the end of February 2011, 49 per cent of the respondents expressed their willingness to participate personally in acts of remonstrance, which was 14 per cent above the average for 2010, with the lowest indicator of 29 per cent for the whole of 2010 in March.¹² In all the above questions, the number of corresponding negative responses increased in proportion to the decrease in the number of positive responses.

Could these figures be considered a sign of delegitimation of Russian power? The question has two aspects. The first presumes the clarification of validity of such measurements and their practical and political relevance. It is hard to imagine that a sample of the 1,600 respondents required for Russian conditions included representatives of those social groups, namely, the social elites, who had a determining influence on national policy and towards whom the rulers were ultimately oriented. The factor of political elites as the dominant determinant of Russian policy is especially important against a background of the imitative nature of the Russian democratic regime and the essentially simulative election process in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The second aspect of the above question concerns the method of generating questionnaires and the evaluation of the received data. Thus, Sergey Belanovsky and Mikhail Dmitriev, the authors of the Centre for Strategic Studies Report on the political crisis in Russia and possible ways out of it, believed that the three-month drops in the approval ratings of the leaders could be interpreted as a sign that the power legitimacy was falling.¹³ However, and this was noted by a number of commentators and analysts, the reduction of the index of trust towards the state leaders, top-ranking officials and power institutions could be interpreted as a response to significant adverse trends in the economy and the consumer sector in particular. Thus, the amount of negative evaluation of the state of the Russian economy increased from 34 per cent in December 2010 to 44 per cent at the end of February 2011.¹⁴ In that month, almost one-third of the respondents witnessed the deterioration of the situation; within a month this indicator increased by 11 per cent. However, the number of those who were optimistic about the future of their welfare fell from 26 per cent in January to 17 per cent in February. A full 96 per cent of the respondents reported an increase in prices of food, goods and services and above all of utilities such as power and water.¹⁵ Although these indicators – food prices, goods and services are surely significant, do they really represent the public good in its entirety?

The most surprising approval/disapproval indices were relatively calm during the whole of 2010, particularly in August–September. During July and

August, Russia suffered from an abnormal heatwave in three-quarters of its European territory and in large parts of its Asian south-west. In many places, this heat was accompanied by prolonged debilitating smog spreading from forest fires. In September, the heat remained only in the southern European part of Russia, but many people were still suffering from the hardship they had suffered during the recent heat and smog. People spoke about little else at the time. Fires had destroyed huge tracts of forest, wiped out dozens of villages, and left hundreds of families homeless. Extensive smog together with searing heat claimed many lives and in the autumn and winter the situation was aggravated by chronic diseases, prolonged colds and many untimely deaths.

The statistics on victims of the exceptional summer of 2010 have remained unpublished. In August, semi-official information on a doubling of the death-rate was circulating in Moscow. However, health workers reported (whispering) much worse statistics in Moscow hospitals. The government was clearly not responsible for the extreme weather conditions. Yet, the scale of the fires could have been much smaller and the fire-fighting much more effective if three years earlier the Forest Code of Russia had not been changed by a decree of President Putin that dissolved the old system of forest management and reduced the forest fire service to almost nothing. The old system inherited from Soviet times was certainly not completely efficient. But dismantling it and failing to replace it with an alternative was one of the contributing factors to the environmental and humanitarian disaster of 2010.

In addition, during the previous decade, the policy of development and expansion of the business and entertainment infrastructure in the capitals, major cities and the areas around them had been conducted in a way that systematically decimated forests and parks. According to some reports, in the 1990s the area of forests razed around Moscow for new developments was equal to the area of Moscow itself. Large cities have in consequence been deprived of their natural lungs. The lack of fresh air in the capital and in most of the big cities in the country had somehow become normal, but during the gruelling weeks of unrelenting heat in the summer of 2010 it became unendurable.

The political aspect of the disaster was actively discussed on the Web and in the print media; attentive viewers could discern the political component in these misfortunes even from the newscasts of the discursively sterile television stations. And yet, this misfortune did not affect the level of approval/disapproval of either national or regional leaders, nor of political institutions.

In August 2010, an ongoing confrontation between the authorities and environmentalists defending the Khimki forest (near Moscow) reached a new stage. The Khimki forest defenders were protesting against a proposed highway from Moscow to St Petersburg, which they had reason to believe had been developed without consideration for the environment or the interests of the residents of the Khimki forest area. The situation was complicated by the fact that the project was backed by a company whose owners had close ties

with senior state figures. The struggle over the forest, which continued for several years,¹⁶ included some dramatic and even tragic episodes and eloquently illustrated the true nature of the relationship between society and the government. The latter frequently just ignored the messages and signals from society, even on matters that directly affected the lives and welfare of citizens. Although thousands of people signed an online petition in support of saving the forest, it is evident that the confrontation, however impressive it might have been symbolically, had very little impact nationwide and could not be considered politically significant.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of December 2010 a sudden protest, involving around 10,000 young people – mainly members of football fan clubs and the like – took place in central Moscow. Some minor incidents occurred in a number of Russian cities. The protest was provoked by police misconduct when several young men from the Caucasus were charged with the murder of a Russian fan; the young men who were arrested immediately after the crime were soon to be released for (procedurally) unclear reasons. In Moscow, the unrest provoked by extremist nationalist slogans was accompanied by violent actions. The whole event was fully covered by the federal TV channels and the press, not to mention the Internet. The authorities, particularly the premier, took certain steps to mitigate the intensity of public emotion. Despite the fact that this clear and extraordinary event was in the spotlight for a month or more, it failed to make any impact on citizens' approval ratings.

According to opinion poll data of November–December 2010, a controversial trial of former Yukos oil company leaders, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev also had no effect on public opinion.

The public mood remained unchanged even after a tragedy in the *stanitsa* (Cossack village) of Kushchevskaya in the Krasnodar region, where, in November 2010, 12 people, including four children, were killed in a massacre. It was an act of revenge on a businessman who refused to obey organized criminals, who had been completely controlling life in the *stanitsa* for about 15 years. At the time of the crime, the businessman and his family were entertaining visitors who were all murdered too. During the investigation, the perpetrators of the crime and the persons behind them were identified and arrested. It turned out that the criminal group had close ties with the local police, and that its leader was both a member of the local legislative body and a member of the ruling party. Some clear facts indicated broad connections of the criminals with some state officials and it appeared that the group was part of a vast criminal network. Commenting on the tragic event, the governor of the region, apparently wishing to shirk his political responsibility, pointed out that there were surely many more places like Kushchevskaya in Russia. This statement was not questioned by anyone, including senior officials. Although the tragedy was widely publicized in the media, neither the president nor the prime minister made any comment. A month later, President Medvedev dismissed the chief interior affairs officer of the Krasnodar region without mentioning the tragedy in Kushchevka. Judging by approval ratings, as in

previous cases, public opinion did not consider this event significant enough to change its attitude towards the authorities.

Some other public opinion indices are also worthy of attention. Despite the fact that Russians in general approve the leaders of the country, they were asked (in June 2010), to what extent they personally feared the corruption and arbitrariness of the authorities. Ten per cent answered that they were not worried; 34 per cent experienced some anxiety, 34 per cent experienced anxiety, and 17 per cent lived in constant fear.¹⁷ Meanwhile, a little more than half of the respondents (53 per cent) basically trusted the Russian judicial system. Forty-three per cent did not, but at the same time 61 per cent could not rely on the courts to resolve matters satisfactorily in the event that their rights were violated.¹⁸ According to different surveys in 2008–11, negative assessments of the health care system,¹⁹ education²⁰ or, the army²¹ clearly dominated. Russians demonstrated a similar attitude to almost all spheres of public life. And at the same time they were selectively positive regarding the leading figures of state.

However, this positive attitude of the people was not limited towards national leaders. This was revealed in polls on a different matter, namely that of life satisfaction.²² Compared with 2005, the number of people in 2011 who were completely satisfied with life as a whole decreased from 17 per cent to 13 per cent. One could easily observe the same trend with some other indicators: family relationships (46–41), health (24–21),²³ personal contacts (38–31), personal status in society (23–18), workplace relationships (18 per cent–16 per cent), education (24–21), leisure time (21–19), family financial status (8–7), family housing conditions (from 17–14), the environment (12–8). Only job satisfaction generally had not decreased compared with 2005 (14 per cent); but in 2007, 18 per cent were completely satisfied with their jobs and in 2009–17 per cent; satisfaction with home diet has increased from 14 per cent to 15 per cent, but in 2007 it was 16 per cent. However, it should be noted that these reductions occurred against the backdrop of the increasing number of those, who were ‘rather satisfied’ with family relationships (34–44), their health (35–44), personal contacts (50–56), personal status in society (43–47), workplace relationships (32–37), education (38–47),²⁴ leisure time (40–47), family financial status (8–7), family housing conditions (39–42), the environment (34–41). Sufficient job satisfaction increased from 28 to 33 per cent and satisfaction with home nutrition decreased from 49 to 47 per cent. The number of people ‘entirely dissatisfied’ increased insignificantly only regarding job satisfaction and relationships at work, while the rest have fallen or remained unchanged and the number of people ‘rather unsatisfied’ decreased or remained unchanged for almost all indicators. The joint numbers of people ‘entirely satisfied’ and ‘rather satisfied’ with life increased from 63 to 69 per cent and the joint number of people ‘completely dissatisfied’ and ‘rather dissatisfied’ with life decreased from 35 to 25 per cent. At the same time, the number of uncertain respondents increased from 3 to 6 per cent.

Discussion

The evidence provided by public opinion polls in Russia around 2010 provoke some general questions regarding the meaning of consent. What does the *consent* of the people to the government mean, namely the consent to what is expected by the people such as particular policies run by the government, the government, state institutions and to the regime as such and in what forms is it expected to be expressed? Concerning those who may inquire about the consent of the people is a separate issue. Are they governors, third-party observers (interested or uninterested) or researchers? To what extent are those who constitute the people politically and generally experienced enough to express their consent or dissent, to understand adequately their own benefit as a common good and for the sake of the common good to obey authority? To what extent is their consent indeed *informed*? What degree of consolidation of the people is needed to recognize dissent to be representative? What forms of its expression are the most convincing and, again, for whom – for the rulers, for outside observers and researchers?

The picture of Russian society that transpires here is really puzzling. People regard their national leaders quite highly, notably more so than they do their own class, which in general is also viewed positively. At the same time, they have a fairly low opinion of the situation in most other spheres of public life, which, theoretically is the result of the actions of the national leaders and, more broadly, the regime. However, this diversity in estimation may indicate an internal dissociation of Russians' value awareness and incoherence in their public and private concerns and preferences. Discrepancy in estimation on similar issues of personal and marital conditions, on the one hand, and conditions in society on the other may testify to atomization of common individual consciousness and its social and political indifference. A relatively high assessment of the leaders which is coupled with a relatively low evaluation of policies and institutions shows, first, that people do not want to see the connection between a politician's status and the policies conducted during his/her period of office, and, second, that high rank/status is seen as a basis of respect for the person holding it. This may indicate the authoritarian nature of contemporary Russian consciousness.

Locke can be interpreted as saying that people express their consent by referring to their sense of public good. However, Locke's statement that the consent of the people is the *only basis* for any lawful government suggests that we should speak not only of public opinion, but of in some way justified and (in different aspects) well-grounded public opinion. Moreover, we need to revise our ideas of 'people' and 'consent' to imply heterogeneity of what is fixed by the word 'people', even when we speak of 'common people' and internal divergence of 'consent' when we speak of 'people's consent'. It is obvious that different social groups perceive power differently in its various manifestations. And power, for its part, shows different degrees of sensitivity to the opinion of 'the people' under different socio-political conditions. In

every society there are groups acutely in disagreement with government and ready whenever possible to express it actively. And it does not estimate equally the disposition for it from different social groups and hence runs differentiated policies of legitimation. Legitimacy does not imply unanimity, though it does not exclude it in some time periods (hardly long), even in a democratic society. The measure of a minimum degree of consolidation of the people concerning the issue of the public good in expressing an attitude towards power can obviously vary depending on the type of society and its particular conditions. Thus, the use of the concepts of 'the consent of the people' and 'the public good' as acceptable general ethical principles of legitimacy requires deeper specification and formalization.

Contemporary discussions on legitimacy are usually focused by default on democratic governance and legitimacy of the rational-legal type, even in its 'ideal' representation. However, Weber emphasized that the types he proposed were 'pure', and in this sense abstract, and that in actual political practice one could nearly always trace mixture and 'dilution' of different types of legitimacy. In post-Weberian political science along with numerous experiments for the empirical verification of Weber's classification of legitimacy and largely owing to them, the classification proposed by Weber has been rethought and reframed.

According to Matey Dogan, the political development of the world after World War II has rather indicated that the Weber scheme is not always empirically supported and on this basis Dogan concludes that it has become virtually obsolete.²⁵ According to Dogan the main argument against the Weber classification of legitimacy is that it ignores the deep inner connection between legitimacy and democracy. This assertion is based on the assumption that only democratic and soft-authoritarian countries are legitimate. In these countries, some 'legal-rational-bureaucratic' legitimacy is present, in correspondingly nationally specific embodiments. As to traditional or charismatic legitimacy, it can no longer be found anywhere else. In countries dominated by rigid-authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, especially those with poor economic conditions, the issue of legitimacy is not even considered. According to Dogan, neither the rulers nor the citizens, especially when they are oppressed by harsh economic conditions and often political repression, are really concerned about it. Dogan very accurately observes that 'one cannot assert that the regime is legitimate merely because it is not openly challenged'.²⁶ But, accordingly, the opposite should be the case: it is impossible to recognize a regime's illegitimacy if it is not disputed and it is impossible to recognize the regime's non-legitimacy if the citizens of the country it rules are not concerned about legitimacy as such. Here, according to the principle of the disinterested or ideal observer, any regime can be recognized as legitimate or illegitimate, regardless of what its citizens think about it. However, this would require a certain methodology allowing operationalization of the phenomenon of legitimacy and identification of the validity of its objective indicators no matter how they are perceived by the citizens of a country and

depend to what extent the citizens are aware of their citizenship and their willingness to exercise it responsibly.

The traditional discourse of legitimacy referred to by Locke and Weber could be enriched by ideas proposed in the last decades, specifically by Peter Stillman and David Beetham. Stillman pointed to possible theoretical premises for the operationalization of the concept of legitimacy. According to Stillman, legitimacy is a characteristic of government in which 'the results of governmental output are compatible with the value pattern of the society'.²⁷ The value pattern includes a hierarchical and a specified set of core values. Referring to the scheme of so-called 'Lasswellian values', Stillman indicates *power, respect, rectitude, affection, well-being, wealth, skill* and *enlightenment*. The configuration of the value pattern can vary, but it should be fairly stable, at least in its core part, otherwise it will not be applicable as a criterion for assessing government output.²⁸ By government output Stillman means not only the accepted and functioning laws, but also all sorts of government actions that have any significance for a society, such as 'declarations of war; suppression of riots; executive fiats',²⁹ etc. Stillman argues that legitimacy is determined precisely by the conformity of the government output (but not by the government's intentions and declarations) to the value pattern of the society. The results of governance should be compatible not only with the value pattern of the society as a whole, but also with value patterns of other social systems (Stillman prefers not to speak about social groups in order to avoid emphasizing the most relevant stakeholders in a given situation) and individuals as well as other societies. Other societies are to be taken into account according to how much they may suffer or benefit from the effects (indirect and unintentional) of another government output.³⁰ Stillman sees the advantage of his approach in presenting legitimacy independent of subjective factors, such as beliefs, individual and group opinions or public opinion. At the same time Stillman shows that in any society, insofar as there may be different value patterns correlative to one or the other social systems, authorities may be considered legitimate for some groups and illegitimate for others. It follows that the legitimacy of certain government policies should be evaluated according to the value patterns of these social systems. Application of Lasswellian values should take into account the specific configuration they acquire in a society. It is obvious that in different societies the value content of criteria and the level of their binding force will be different. So, legitimacy is a feature largely contextualized in time and considering its particular identification and qualification one should take into account its retrospective and prospective vectors.

David Beetham's conception of legitimacy is more sophisticated. Not being satisfied with Weber's concept of legitimacy as an expression of people's beliefs, and concerned with a kind of objective criteria of legitimacy independent of just public opinion, Beetham argues that one can analyse the legitimacy of power in terms of three criteria. Power can be considered legitimate if it conforms to established rules. The rules can be justified by reference

to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate actors, and there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation. So, according to Beetham's interpretation, the power and the people are presented as mutually oriented and cooperative actors. Promoting obedience and cooperation, legitimacy can enhance order and stability in a society.³¹

It would be interesting to develop public opinion polls on these theoretical grounds to collect more relevant and specific data regarding legitimacy and to avoid the ambiguity revealed in the above-mentioned Russian public opinion polls. However, an advanced survey aimed at figuring out the nature of legitimacy of Russian power would require the clarification of – in the terms of Stillman – a value pattern present in Russian society today. Taking into account the revealed incoherence of public and private preferences, it may be plausible to assume that there is no relatively common and unifying value pattern in Russian society. To understand the kind of legitimacy of Russian power, one would need to return to the discourse proposed by Dogan regarding the global trend towards uniformity in configurations of legitimacy. There is no doubt that whatever is mainstream in interpreting the legitimacy of power, it is certainly 'legal-rational-bureaucratic' legitimacy, according to Dogan. But there is no reason to abandon the idea of typological diversity in the phenomenon of legitimacy for the sake of a more complete and distinct understanding of various political processes in different countries. Thus, the rule of President Yeltsin in 1991–3 rested on charismatic legitimacy, as did the rule of President Putin during his first years in office. However, as Putin had been 'appointed' to the Russian presidency by Boris Yeltsin who left his post ahead of time, he was legitimized in the traditional way too. Likewise President Medvedev, who, having no charisma, became legitimate due not only to the legal procedure of his election, but to the tradition of succession to the presidency from Putin. Meanwhile, while Vladimir Putin quickly gained points according to the standards of rational legitimacy, most notably for his policies aimed at the stabilization of the socio-political situation in the country, increasing the role of the central government, fighting crime, while at the same time strengthening his personal charisma by diverse political activity (especially impressive when compared with Boris Yeltsin during his last term of office), Medvedev did not manage to win any real points. So, the Russian political landscape at the beginning of 2010 is peculiar for its mixed, amorphous type of legitimacy. There are, in Weber's terms, some elements of rational legitimacy, but it is dominated by the traditional type of fluttering charismatic legitimacy.

Still, who is concerned with the legitimacy of state power in Russia? Legitimacy does not seem to be a tool of value justification of state power in Russia. Because of the simulacrum character of the election process, limited means of expression of public opinion, opacity of decision-making procedures at all levels, the lack of transparency of power to society and in this sense the lack of 'openness' in public, the issue of legitimacy of Russian power may still be considered irrelevant. There is an even broader issue of applicability and

discursive (not to be confused with theoretical) relevance of the concept of legitimacy. This term is certainly not from the vocabulary of living language. It seems that News journalists do not need it. It is apparently not required by analytical journalists either. It might be interesting for PR-analysts and spin doctors (the so called ‘political technologists’), but the fact that this concept has not yet been operationalized rather testifies that there is no place for it in such activity either.

So, although the phenomenon marked by the term ‘legitimacy’ is significant, PR-analysts and spin doctors manage to deal with it by using a different dictionary. Meanwhile, it seems that the term is used to some extent by intellectual journalists but mostly they use it quite broadly and therefore not restrictively. So, coming from the vocabulary of political science and political history, only the term ‘legitimacy’ requires further careful conceptual elaboration. Clarification of the value aspects of legitimacy, the value analysis of the mechanisms of legitimation and operationalization of this concept would enrich the political discourse and provide the public, especially media professionals and political activists, with a, hopefully, significant tool for the value analysis of power and public control over it.

Notes

- 1 In *Two Treatises of Government* John Locke seems to use the term ‘legitimacy’ only once, namely in §123 of the First Treatise, speaking on the rights of a wife and of a concubine to inheritance. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 231.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- 3 Locke says the following:

Political power, then, I take to be a right of making laws, with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community in the execution of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury, and all this only for the public good.

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 268

In his own way, Locke develops the idea proposed by the fifteenth-century English lawyer John Fortescue, who argued that the legitimacy of royal power ensured its compliance with the interests of his subjects. In this very form, this idea was later embraced by David Hume, who believed that ‘the immediate sanction of government’ is in the people’s interest ‘in the security and protection’. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 550.

- 4 The indicators of legitimacy reflected in contemporary literature, such as recognition of authority, recognition of its power as authoritative, rightful and fair are redundant. The idea of the consent of the people signifies exactly the recognition of authority, its credibility and its political efforts as rightful and fair.
- 5 Apparently it is worth selecting different types of legitimacy according to the relevant matter. Political–legal interpretation of legitimacy corresponds to the

- governance, to the constitution and international instruments, checking them for compliance with the rule of law (a close understanding is suggested in Konstantin Zavershinsky, “‘Legitimnost’”: genesis, stanovlenie razvitie kontsepta’, *Polis*, no. 2 (2001), p. 130.) The ethical interpretation of legitimacy associates it with people’s attitudes towards governance and its policies in regard to compatibility with the shared ideas on the public and private good.
- 6 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. by Gunther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 213.
 - 7 Arild Wæraas, ‘On Weber: Legitimacy and Legitimation in the Public Relations’, in Øyvind Ihlen, Betteke van Ruler, and Magnus Fredriksson (eds), *Public Relations and Social Theory: Key Figures and Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 308.
 - 8 On heterogeneity of the ‘target groups’ of legitimation see: Rodney Barker, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 70–1.
 - 9 Nikolai Baranov, *Politicheskie otnosheniia i politicheskii protsess v sovremennoi Rossii* (St Petersburg: BGTU Press, 2003), p. 52.
 - 10 Levada-Center, ‘Martovskie reitingi odobreniia i doveriia’, *Levada-Center*, March 24, 2011.
 - 11 Ibid.
 - 12 FOM, ‘Uroven’ protestnykh nastroyenii’, *Dominanty*, no. 8 (2011).
 - 13 Sergei Belanovsky and Mikhail Dmitriev, *Politicheskij krizis v Rossii i vozmozhnye mekhanizmy ego razvitiia* (Moscow: CSR), p. 6. The authors then developed their conclusion on the basis of the data of the Center for Strategic Studies research, public opinion polls (mainly at regional level) and focus-groups, which proved the decreasing electoral ratings of the president and the premier and what’s more, the president’s average rating was 2–2.5 times lower than the premier’s. See Sergei Belanovsky and Mikhail Dmitriev, *Politicheskii krizis v Rossii i vozmozhnye mekhanizmy ego razvitiia* (Moscow: CSR), p. 9.
 - 14 FOM, ‘Sostoianie rossijskoi ekonomiki’, *Dominanty*, no. 10 (2011).
 - 15 FOM, ‘Dinamika tsen’, *Dominanty*, no. 13 (2011).
 - 16 For a case study of this strike, see Ruben Apressyan and Marina Kolytina, ‘Bor’ba za Khimkinsii Les: Situatsionno-analiticheskii ocherk’, *Ekologicheskaiia Etika* (2010). <http://www.econet.mrsu.ru/file/151/> Борьба за Химкинский лес.doc.
 - 17 WCIOM, ‘Vserossiiskii Opros WCIOM’, *WCIOM*, June 5, 2010.
 - 18 Lev Gudkov (ed.), *Otnoshenie rossiian k sudebnoi sisteme: Pervaia volna oprosa naseleniia* (Moscow: Levada-Center), pp. 14–15, 22.
 - 19 Levada-Center, ‘Zdravookhranenie’, *Levada-Center* (2011); Aleksandr Sinelnikov, ‘Vliianie demograficheskogo statusa i semeinogo polozheniia na obshchestvennoe mnenie o sisteme zdravookhraneniia’, *Sotsialnye Aspekty Zdorov’ia Naseleniia*, February 28, 2011. <http://vestnik.mednet.ru/content/view/256/27>.
 - 20 Levada-Center Press-bulletin, ‘Otsenka rossiianami kachestva otechestvennogo obrazovaniia’, *Levada-Center*, August 10, 2010.
 - 21 WCIOM Press-bulletin, ‘Sostoianie armii: monitoring’, *WCIOM*, no. 1694, February 21, 2011.
 - 22 Levada-Center Press-bulletin, ‘Rossiiane ob udovletvorennost’iu zhizn’iu’, *Levada-Center*, February 18, 2011.
 - 23 In 2000 – 27%.
 - 24 In 2000 – 27%.
 - 25 Matey Dogan, ‘Regimes, Legitimacy and the Crisis of Trust’, *Polis*, no. 6 (1994), p. 148.
 - 26 Ibid., p.149.
 - 27 Peter Stillman, ‘The Concept of Legitimacy’, *Polity*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1974), p. 39.

- 28 Stillman seems to be appealing to Lasswellian values as an example. Looking at this set one can easily imagine its incompleteness. It needs to be complemented with some political, civic, environmental and international values.
- 29 Peter Stillman, 'The Concept of Legitimacy', *Polity*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1974), p. 40.
- 30 An example concerning Mikhail Gorbachev is quite interesting in this regard. As an initiator of Perestroika and New Thinking he has been differently perceived in the world and in Russia, which was evident from how his eightieth birthday was celebrated in Russia (with an informal, almost private party, although not confined to a narrow circle. He was awarded a state honour by the president, but his birthday party was virtually ignored by state officials) and abroad (by a charity world-class concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London) in spring 2011. The outputs of Gorbachev's supreme rule in the USSR are compatible with the expectations and values of the elite and the public in the West. And, *vice versa*, what he achieved for the USSR and, specifically, Russia have been evaluated in Russia as mainly negative. In 2010, 25 years after Perestroika had been launched, 41 per cent of respondents believed that it would have been better had there been no Perestroika begun; 38 per cent did not agree with them, and 20 per cent were undecided (in 2000 opinions were distributed accordingly: 50 per cent, 40 per cent, 10 per cent and in 1996 – 52 per cent, 41 per cent, 7 per cent). See WCIOM Press-bulletin, 'Rossiane o perestroike: negativnye otsenki teraiut aktual'nost?', *WCIOM*, no. 1445, March 9, 2010.
- 31 David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1991), p. 35.