

Studying histories of ideas to learn about continuity and change



Sharing European Histories

Self-Guided Course

Studying Histories of Ideas to Learn About Continuity and Change

Lilia Khachatryan

**Evens
Foundation**



EuroClio

Studying Histories of Ideas to Learn About Continuity and Change

Example Lesson Plan: Legitimacy- the right to rule

Lilia Khachatryan

This example lesson plan of the Studying Histories to Learn About Continuity and Change is part of the Sharing European Histories Self-Guided Course, developed by Lilia Khachatryan. Its aim is to demonstrate how the Teaching Strategy can be adapted into the local context and classroom setting.

Time needed: 90min

Approximate age: 15-17

Learning objectives:

The aim of the lesson is to enable students to engage with the evolution (continuity and change) of the idea of legitimacy, how it is evolved throughout the history.

To reach this goal students will:

- Define how legitimacy was perceived in different periods of history.
- Identify the sources of legitimacy, where the right to rule comes from.
- Describe what/who can be deemed as illegitimate power or leader.
- Reveal historical events and personalities impacted the progression of the idea of Legitimacy.
- Draw conclusions on the key questions concerning the idea.
- Create the timeline of the idea's evolution.

Materials and equipment needed:

- Large sheets of paper
- Color markers
- Tablets (computer, smartphone)
- Events

Lesson Plan

Activity 1 (15min)

This activity will help to clarify the main features of the idea of legitimacy. The teacher will gain a better understanding of students' background knowledge of this idea.

Divide the class into the groups of 4-6 students (max. 4 groups). Provide each group with a large sheet of paper and markers. Ask the students what comes to mind when they think of Legitimacy and collectively decide on the five most important/significant responses and record them in the center of the worksheet. All group members agree on the top five items (3min).

Ask each group to present the five most important responses they agreed on and share their reasoning (2min for each presentation). Ask the class to come up with the final top features of Legitimacy (4min).

Activity 2 (35min)

This activity aims to make the students familiar with the main events/key moments that marked the idea's evolution.

Distribute the events among the students. Assign each student an event to research and ask them to be ready to give a short three-minute presentation to the class on their findings. Decide on the best way to distribute the events (for instance some students will feel comfortable and manage to fulfill the task in time with short text events, while the others will do the same with longer ones) (10min). Ask students to present their findings. Two or three students can present the same event while complementing each other. During the presentation other students fill in the worksheet.

Worksheet on the next page.

Activity 3 (25min)

Students will create a visual aid that they can use to contextualize the idea's evolution across time and space.

Divide the class into the groups of 4-6 students and ask them to organize the key events/moments chronologically (5min). Provide them with colour markers and tell them to use different colours to specify different periods of the idea's evolution. Explain them that they may group some events into historical periods (Ancient times, Middle Ages, etc.).

Ask students to create infographics on the idea's evolution across time and space (15min).

Option 1. Ask students to create digital infographics, show them some websites they can use. Tell them to look through the different infographic timeline templates and choose one they believe fits well for presenting the idea's evolution.

Option 2. Ask students to create infographics on a sheet of paper, provide each group with a large sheet of paper and colour markers. Ask them to decide on the title and the design (give them some ideas on timeline shapes, if needed, for example horizontal/vertical lines, curves, etc.).

Throughout this exercise, facilitate the group-work by asking them to explain what might have accounted for the different phases or shifts in thinking and encourage them to tie these changes back to events that have been arranged in their timelines. Help students use question prompts. For example:

- If you had to choose just one event as the most important for the evolution of the idea of Legitimacy, which one would you select? How can you present it with your infographic?
- If you had to select a period (Enlightenment, Middle Ages, etc.) that most contributed to the development of the idea, which one would you choose? How can you show that on your infographic?
- If you had to select a setback as the most harmful to Legitimacy idea's progression, which one would you choose?
- Which of these events could be deemed not significant enough and non-essential to understanding the spread of the idea that you wouldn't include in your infographic?
- Where did the main events happen related to the idea?

Gallery walk. After students create the infographics, they present them by placing their infographics in different corners of the classroom, then they take time to walk around the classroom and observe the posters (5min).

Activity 4 Discussion (15min)

This is a way to have a discussion that could be relevant for the students' historical thinking. Once the students have achieved a chronological and geographical understanding of the evolution of the idea of Legitimacy, the discussion will help them understand what factors influenced the evolution of the idea.

Organize a class discussion (15-20min).

Some points that could be discussed are:

- Which were the key events and turning points in the progression of the idea of Legitimacy? Which were the main setbacks?
- In which historical moments did the progression accelerate? In which historical moments did the idea change?
- What historical events affected the evolution of the idea of Legitimacy (civil war, revolution, etc)? • Who were the main personalities that contributed to the development of the idea? • What are the sources of legitimacy, where does the right to rule come from?
- How popular is the idea in the present-day? What might account for its popularity or lack thereof?
- Events

Monarchy- Divine right of kings

Divine right has been a key element of the legitimation of many absolute monarchies. Significantly, the doctrine asserts that a monarch is not accountable to any earthly authority (such as a parliament) because their right to rule is derived from divine authority. Thus, the monarch is not subject to the will of the people, of the aristocracy, or of any other estate of the realm. It follows that only divine authority can judge a monarch, and that any attempt to depose, dethrone or restrict their powers runs contrary to God's will and may constitute a sacrilegious act. It is often expressed in the phrase by the Grace of God.

Sacred kingship

Anywhere between the 34th and the 30th centuries BC, Menes (fl. c. 3200–3000 BC), legendary first king (pharaoh) of unified Egypt, according to tradition, joined Upper and Lower Egypt in a single centralized monarchy and established ancient Egypt's First Dynasty. Though the identity of Menes is the subject of ongoing debate, he appears in some sources as the first human ruler of Egypt, directly inheriting the throne from the god Horus.

The Egyptians believed their pharaoh to be the mediator between the gods and the world of men. After death the pharaoh became divine and passed on his sacred powers and position to the new pharaoh, his son. The king "is on earth for ever and ever, judging mankind and propitiating the gods, and setting order in place of disorder. He gives offerings to the gods and mortuary offerings to the spirits [the blessed dead]".

In early Mesopotamian culture, kings were often regarded as deities after their death. Shulgi of Ur (2094 – 2046 BC) is considered the greatest king of the Ur and was among the first Mesopotamian rulers to declare himself to be divine and have been worshipped by the people following his death. The name of the god Sin was added to his name, and he began to be called Shulgi-Sin. The *Mesopotamian Chronicles* describe Shulgi as 'divine' and 'the fast runner'. He was brother to the sun god Shamash and husband of the goddess Inanna, according to hymns and songs.

Shulgi inherited a stable kingdom after his father was killed in battle with the Gutians and proceeded to build upon his father's legacy to raise Sumer to great cultural heights.

In a single day, Shulgi ran from Nippur to Ur and back, a distance of 321.8 kilometers, in order to officiate at the religious festival in both cities. His run established his own superhuman nature in his people's awareness.

Monarchy- Divine right of kings

Divine right has been a key element of the legitimation of many absolute monarchies. Significantly, the doctrine asserts that a monarch is not accountable to any earthly authority (such as a parliament) because their right to rule is derived from divine authority. Thus, the monarch is not subject to the will of the people, of the aristocracy, or of any other estate of the realm. It follows that only divine authority can judge a monarch, and that any attempt to depose, dethrone or restrict their powers runs contrary to God's will and may constitute a sacrilegious act. It is often expressed in the phrase by the Grace of God.

Mandate of Heaven

The concept of the Mandate of Heaven was first used to support the rule of the kings of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC), and legitimize their overthrow of the earlier Shang dynasty (1600–1069 BC). It was used throughout the history of China to legitimize the successful overthrow and installation of new emperors.

The Mandate of Heaven is a Chinese political philosophy that was used in ancient and imperial China to justify the rule of the King or Emperor of China. According to this doctrine, heaven- which embodies the natural order and will of the universe – bestows/awards the mandate on a just ruler of China, the "Son of Heaven". Because of China's influence in medieval times, the concept of the Mandate of Heaven spread to other East Asian countries (Korea, Vietnam, Japan) as a justification for rule by divine political legitimacy.

Monarchy- Divine right of kings

In the Middle Ages, the idea that God had granted earthly power to the monarch, just as he had given spiritual authority and power to the church, especially to the Pope, was already a well-known concept. It is in the Old Testament that God chose kings to rule over Israel begins with Saul, who was then rejected by God in favor of David, whose dynasty continued (at least in the southern kingdom) until the Babylonian captivity. In the New Testament the first pope St. Peter commands that all Christians shall honor the Roman Emperor.

Holy Roman Empire – the city of God

In 800, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne (742-814), or Charles the Great (king of the Franks, 768-814, and emperor of the West, 800-814) Emperor of the Romans. Charlemagne was known to have used the title “Charles, most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific emperor, governing the Roman Empire.”

During the Early Middle Ages, Charlemagne united the majority of western and central Europe, founded the Holy Roman Empire and fostered the cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance. His own legislation and the pronouncements of his chief counselors on the art of ruling began to add a religious dimension to what it meant to rule and to be a subject. Increasingly

prominent was the idea that in a Christian society he who ruled "by the grace of God" had an obligation to rule according to the commands of God, and his subjects had a duty to respect the law of God in their conduct. By that definition the ruler must become an agent serving to realize the will of God, a duty that required that he direct his efforts toward assuring the salvation of his subjects. Kingship began to take on a ministerial dimension which mandated that a ruler be both priest and king, dedicated to assuring both the spiritual and material well being of his subjects. This concept of kingship, which drew its substance chiefly from the Old Testament model of kingship and from St. Augustine's ideas on the nature of the city of God, began to blur the distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the Church and the state, and to bestow on the secular leader the authority to direct both spheres.

Magna Carta

On June 15, 1215, King John of England agreed to a royal charter commonly called Magna Carta, (Great Charter) under threat of a possible rebellion by the country's powerful barons, and actually agreed to play by the rules of law. Among other things, Magna Carta said that the king, who is the most powerful person in England, could not imprison a man, and he would not take their property and he would not hurt them, except according to the law of the land. Magna Carta stated that the law comes from free people to the king. This was revolutionary, and the idea that people live according to laws and that not even a king is above them, that began with Magna Carta. It truly was of some notion that the king does not have divine right and absolute power. It was the first written constitution in European history.

During the American Revolution, the colonists believed they were entitled to the same rights as Englishmen, rights guaranteed in Magna Carta. They embedded those rights into the laws of their states and later into the Constitution of the United States of America (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1791).

In 1941, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed in his inauguration speech: "'The democratic aspiration is no mere recent phase in human history . . . It was written in Magna Carta."

Fascism -dictatorial power

In 1922, Italy became the first fascist country, ruled by Benito Mussolini (Il Duce). The Italian Fascists imposed totalitarian rule and crushed political and intellectual opposition.

On January 3, 1925, in his speech given to the Italian Parliament Benito Mussolini declared "I, and I alone, assume the political, moral, and historical responsibility for all that has happened," referring to the assassination of socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti. In doing so, Mussolini dared prosecutors and the rest of Italy's democratic institutions, as well as the king, to challenge his authority. None did. Thus, from 1925 onward, Mussolini asserted his right to supreme power and was able to operate openly as a dictator, styling himself *Il Duce* and fusing the state and the Fascist Party.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Fascism based its political legitimacy upon the arguments of traditional authority, claiming that the political legitimacy of their right to rule derived from philosophically denying the (popular) political legitimacy of elected liberal democratic governments.

In 1932, the political philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) in his book *Legalität und Legitimität* (Legality and Legitimacy) addressed an anti-democratic polemic treatise that asked: "How can parliamentary government make for law and legality, when a 49 per cent minority accepts as politically legitimate the political will of a 51 per cent majority?"

Enlightenment- The idea of society as a social contract

During the 17th and 18th centuries it was thought that the state that had once been viewed as an earthly approximation of an eternal order, with the City of Man modelled on the City of God, now it came to be seen as a mutually beneficial arrangement among humans aimed at protecting the natural rights and self interest of each.

The Enlightenment became critical, reforming, and eventually revolutionary. Locke and Jeremy Bentham in England, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, and Condorcet in France, and Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson in colonial America all contributed to an evolving critique of the arbitrary, authoritarian state and to sketching the outline of a higher form of social organization, based on natural rights and functioning as a political democracy.

In 1690, English philosopher John Locke published his philosophical masterpiece, *Two Treatises of Government*, where he stated that political legitimacy derives from popular explicit and implicit consent of the governed, that the government is not legitimate unless it is carried on with the consent of the governed. According to Locke, the government's only purpose is the public good; the political power that is not exercised for the public good is deemed illegitimate.

“Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent.”

“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, Second Treatise of Government

In 1762, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his work, *The Social Contract*, where he stated that humans are born free, but they live in chains, so if a state, could be based on a genuine social contract, then people would receive in exchange for their independence a better kind of freedom, namely true political, or republican, liberty. Such liberty is to be found in obedience to a self-imposed law. According to him, the social contract is a compact between the individual and a collective “general will” aimed at the common good and reflected in the laws of an ideal state and for maintaining that existing society rests on a false social contract that perpetuates inequality and rule by the rich.

“What, then, is the government? An intermediary body established between the subjects and the sovereign for their mutual communication, a body charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of freedom, both civil and political.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract

Democratic revolutions

The American Revolution—also called the U.S. War of Independence—was the insurrection fought between 1775 and 1783 through which 13 of Great Britain's North American colonies threw off British rule to establish the sovereign United States of America, founded with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was the world's first federal democratic republic founded on the consent of

the governed.

The French Revolution (1787-1799) sought to completely change the relationship between the rulers and those they governed and to redefine the nature of political power. It was a watershed event in modern European history that began with the Estates General of 1789 and ended with the formation of the French Consulate in November 1799. Many of its ideas are considered fundamental principles of liberal democracy. During this period, French citizens razed and redesigned their country's political landscape, uprooting centuries-old institutions such as absolute monarchy and the feudal system. The upheaval was caused by widespread discontent with the French monarchy and the poor economic policies of King Louis XVI, who met his death by guillotine, as did his wife Marie Antoinette. Although it failed to achieve all of its goals and at times degenerated into a chaotic bloodbath, the French Revolution played a critical role in shaping modern nations by showing the world the power inherent in the will of the people.

Max Weber - three types of political legitimacy

In 1922, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule" (Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft) essay written by German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) was published in the journal *Preussische Jahrbücher*. The three types of political legitimacy described by him are traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal. He basically diagnosed a historical transformation from traditional to legal-rational types of legitimacy, in which legitimacy based on the charisma of a (revolutionary) leader formed a transitory phenomenon.

Traditional legitimacy derives from societal custom and habit that emphasize the history of the authority of tradition. Traditionalists understand this form of rule as historically accepted, hence its continuity, because it is the way society has always been. Therefore, the institutions of traditional government usually are historically continuous, as in monarchy and tribalism.

Charismatic legitimacy derives from the ideas and personal charisma of the leader, a person whose authoritative persona charms and psychologically dominates the people of the society to agreement with the government's régime and rule. A charismatic government usually features weak political and administrative institutions, because they derive authority from the persona of the leader, and usually disappear without the leader in power. However, if the charismatic leader has a successor, a government derived from charismatic legitimacy might continue.

Rational-legal legitimacy derives from a system of institutional procedure, wherein government institutions establish and enforce law and order in the public interest. Therefore, it is through public trust that the government will abide the law that confers rational-legal legitimacy

Congress of Vienna

In November, 1814, the diplomats from all over Europe gathered in Vienna for a conference, which was later known as Congress of Vienna and lasted till June 1815. The objective of the Congress was to provide a long-term peace and stability plan for Europe.

The Congress of Vienna was guided by certain principles, one being the idea of legitimacy. The conference was chaired by Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich. The principle of legitimacy is what Metternich used to lead Vienna. Metternich firmly believed in absolute monarchy and fiercely opposed constitutions and liberalism. To him, it was necessary to restore the legitimate monarchs who would preserve traditional institutions in order to reestablish peace and stability in Europe. In other words, he wanted to return Europe to the old days, before the French Revolution and Napoleon. This meant that the correct ruler, usually a king, should be put back on the throne of their country.

The second principle of the Congress was the idea of compensation and balance of power, which meant that if a king could not be put back on his throne, then he should be paid with money, land, or something of value. The Congress of Vienna wanted legitimacy and compensation for all of Europe.

Consequently, the Bourbon dynasty returned to power not only in France, but also in Spain and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. A number of rulers returned to their thrones in the German and Italian states as well. Moreover, the Holy Alliance was formed, and gradually, all the rulers of Europe joined the alliance (except the British king, the Ottoman sultan, and the Pope). The members of the Holy Alliance derived their right of intervention against all liberal and nationalist movements from their responsibility to God. However, its significance was mostly symbolic.

Legitimacy in 21st century

In Western countries after World War II, thinking about democratic legitimacy concentrated more on the output or performance of democratic regimes. The relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness of a political system was cast mainly in such a form that legitimacy was seen as a substitute for effectiveness.

In nowadays democratic countries the government legitimacy derives from the popular perception that the elected government abides by democratic principles in governing, and thus is legally accountable to its people.

Arthur I. Applbaum-legitimacy to further freedoms

In 2020, Adams professor of political leadership and democratic values Arthur I. Applbaum published his book, *Legitimacy: The Right to Rule in a Wanton World*. “One of the heartbreaking things about our current politics,” he said, “is that the president thinks he can demand whatever he wants because he was elected, notwithstanding existing laws and regulations”. According to Applbaum, legitimacy depends not only on how power is *gained*, but also on how it is *used*. A government, he offers, rules legitimately if its rule furthers each individual’s freedom. Citizens govern themselves by choosing their leaders, who are trusted by them to determine “the substance of policy and law” to advance their citizens’ freedom. To avoiding the dangers of short of legitimacy (which he calls wantonism) leaders should not only advance liberty, but also provide transparency and accountable reasoning for their actions.