



# Intervention & Diplomacy: A Theory of International Legitimacy

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## I. Introduction

Today's globalized world includes organizations which represent all countries, or more specifically represent all *legitimate* countries. These countries and organizations work in integrated systems of diplomatic relations, fiscal systems/trade, and military alliances. The interconnected nature of the international world today highlights the importance of diplomatic relations between countries as well as between countries and global organizations. In this scenario, the question of legitimacy comes into play - if countries are to function interconnectedly and have symbiotic relations with one another, then some crucial questions arise: which countries are legitimate what makes them legitimate?

These questions have been deliberated through the lens of state legitimacy –essentially a people's acceptance of the state that governs them. However, as the world has gotten more interconnected, the question of legitimacy has been made more complex. Taking the example of Yemen, we see a peculiar occurrence, where two factions lay claim to the same territory. The internationally recognised government of Yemen – considered the legitimate holders of authority – has less coercive capacity than the more powerful rebel forces, which remain unrecognized by the international community. This abnormality sparks the question of whether the sources of a state's legitimacy extend beyond its domestic public.

This paper argues that the sources of a state's political legitimacy extend beyond the domestic realm, and can include other states and international bodies. More specifically, we theorize the existence of specific mechanisms which can be employed by these international actors to either extend or diminish a state's legitimacy. We also discuss the consequences of expanding the framework of state legitimacy to international sources –if international bodies do not accept a state's legitimacy, then the state and its citizens live in economic and political isolation.

The paper is laid out as follows. First, we discuss the existing literature, showing how legitimacy has been conventionally studied through a domestic lens. We then analyze contemporary developments in the literature pertaining to global governance institutions<sup>2</sup> and moral cosmopolitan commitments. Following this, we provide a theoretical framework where we put forth mechanisms around international sources of legitimacy. We then furnish three case studies, illustrating ways in which international sources of legitimacy have affected contemporary states. We conclude with a discussion of our findings.

## II. Literature Review

Legitimacy in political theory has been cemented as a fundamental concept to understand the functioning of political authority. Max Weber defines the modern state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”(1946). This

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<sup>2</sup>By global governance institutions, we refer to bodies like the United Nations, which coordinate the behaviour of transnational actors

definition affirms the importance of legitimacy in the conceptualization of a state - a state can exercise its political authority because it is legitimate.

Generally speaking, political legitimacy pertains to the acceptance of a state's authority. A practical elucidation of this can be seen at an airport – an individual would let airport security personnel frisk their belongings and search them as they accept that these officers have legitimate authority acting under the wings of the state. Existing literature classifies legitimacy into two broad interpretations: descriptive and normative legitimacy. Descriptive legitimacy pertains to an individual's beliefs about authority. To return to our airport example, since I accept the authority of the airport security to frisk my belongings, I am conferring legitimacy onto the state by accepting its authority – this is descriptive legitimacy. Meanwhile, normative legitimacy pertains to the *justification* of the belief in authority. For example, the state is legitimate because I believe that the airport security is justified to frisk my possessions. This belief stems from the presence of rules and regulations established by a rational and just system. In these examples, airport security acting under the wings of the state exercises their political authority granted by the state's legitimacy.

#### *Descriptive and normative legitimacy*

Descriptive legitimacy suggests that authoritative action by holders of political authority is lent prestige by virtue of individuals beliefs. Max Weber famously elucidates legitimacy as a purely descriptive concept, which underscores the basis of any governing system within which the governed accept the authority and willfully submit to their rulers(1946). The acceptance of authority is based on various beliefs. Weber lists out three sources of such beliefs on the socio-political order – tradition, charisma, and faith in legality and rationality. Descriptive legitimacy explains how belief of subjects in a given socio-political order – like that of a political regime -- creates social norms that are less volatile than those of self-interest and habitual obedience(Weber and Parsons 1997). However descriptive legitimacy fails to account for higher order beliefs subjects have on legitimacy or, in other words, their justifiability of this institution(Beetham 1991).

Normative legitimacy delves into the justifiability of governing authority. Primarily explored by John Rawls(1999; 2005), Arthur Ripstein(2004) and Joseph Raz(2009), it refers to the standards based on why a government is acceptable, justification on why political bodies exist, and finally, justifies the authority and obligations rulers pose on subjects. The concept of normative legitimacy provides us with justifications of coercive political power helping to provide a perspective on the moral limits of a state's authority(Rawls 2005). Where political bodies may confer de-facto authority without conferring legitimacy, they are limited to constraints of being only authoritative until there is sufficient acquiescence amongst their subjects(Ripstein 2004; Rawls 2005). When legitimacy is intertwined with authoritative power then the legitimate authority can lay the foundation for political obligations to spring up when normative conditions are satisfied(Raz 2009). One such normative condition is the provision of essential political goods such as socio-economic safety and stability: a rudimentary precursor to any sources of (normative) legitimacy(Williams 2008). For a state to be legitimate, the provisions of these goods must also be discernible to its subjects.

The study of normative legitimacy gives us an insight into the tendency of existing literature to equate justice with legitimacy. Theories set by John Rawls posit that justice and legitimacy stem from the same political values(2005). Furthermore, the perspective of Thomas Hobbes on legitimacy can largely be considered normative in nature. Hobbes outlines that state legitimacy arises from the social contract - an unwritten contract upon which individuals concede some of their freedoms to achieve avoidance of living in the state of nature(1651). Hobbes outlines that because the state provides security and order, it therefore successfully avoids a return to the violence and anarchy of the state of nature. Thus, one can view this assertion as a justification for the acceptance of the state's authority. Accordingly, Hobbes asserts that a legitimate state is one which maintains order and peace and prevents the return to the state of nature, which is a rational and moral justification for political authority and hence falls in line with the concept of normative legitimacy(1651).

As evidenced by the discussion on descriptive and normative legitimacy, the majority of conventional literature on political legitimacy has focused on domestic sources of legitimacy. Descriptive legitimacy emphasizes three sources of legitimacy(Weber 1946). The first is tradition, wherein the fact that an institution is longstanding grants legitimacy to a political body. An example of this is a monarch who is legitimized to rule by tradition of his bloodline. Charisma as a source of legitimacy highlights that subjects can grant legitimacy to a political body through faith in the individuals in charge of that political body – predominantly rulers. The third source of legitimacy can be described as legitimacy by virtue of faith in the rationality of the rule of law a political body imposes upon its subjects. The sources of legitimacy prescribed by descriptive legitimacy highlight the relation between the governed and the governor - making this a domestic concept.

Similarly, normative legitimacy characterizes consent and justification by the domestic public as its focal sources of legitimacy. John Locke's social contract theory was a pivotal point which elevated consent of the governed to a main source of legitimacy(1988). Even scholars arguing for a minimalist form of government view consent of the governed as a necessary condition for political legitimacy – suggesting the

importance of the domestic lens with which to view legitimacy (Nozick 1974). The liberal principle of legitimacy outlines public justification as a focal source of political legitimacy providing justification for political coercion if and when it is backed with a public reasoning “which all citizens, as reasonable and rational, can endorse in the light of their common human reason” (Rawls and Kelly 2001, 41). Even here, the public that is referred to is citizens - a domestic public.

#### *International legitimacy*

However, newer literature on political legitimacy has moved beyond discussions on domestic legitimacy to the international realm. This has been driven, in part, by the rise of global governance institutions on the world stage. So far, international legitimacy has been discussed as the legitimacy of global governance institutions.

Global governance institutions are theorized to gain legitimacy through two channels. The first – theorized by Charles Beitz – illustrates the international political as follows: “international society is understood as domestic society writ large, with states playing the roles occupied by persons in domestic society” (1979, 408). In other words, international bodies gain legitimacy through the legitimacy of their member states - who consent to be a part of them. For instance, the International Red Cross (IRC) attains its legitimacy through the legitimate domestic political institution of its member states, such as the United States (US), a state with strong domestic legitimacy (Ypi 2008).

The second channel argues that moral cosmopolitan commitments, such as universal human rights are a key source of the legitimacy for these institutions (Pogge and Horton 2008). Using the aforementioned example to illustrate this, the IRC would still be legitimate even if it were not backed by member states with strong domestic legitimacy as it pertains to matters of global justice. Allen Buchanan goes beyond the legitimacy of international organizations to discuss the legitimacy of the international legal system as a whole (2007). On the international stage, he emphasizes moral justification of political power as a requirement of legitimacy in international law. Further, he rejects Beitz’ argument around state consent of international institutions as being sufficient for their legitimacy. Beyond even moral cosmopolitanism, he argues the protection of fundamental human rights and improving democratic accountability among states as key to wielding legitimate political power at the international level (Buchanan 2007).

The burgeoning debates around the concept of international legitimacy have widened the scope of legitimate political authority to global governance institutions. However there has been limited research and discussions on legitimacy of a state stemming from the source of an external (international) political body. While the legitimacy of a type of international political body - a global governance institution – has been posited to stem from the legitimacy of a state, the converse has not been deliberated upon. In other words, how international political bodies or external states affect the legitimacy of another state.

#### *Theoretical framework*

In service of filling the gap in the literature discussed in the previous paragraph, this paper will construct a theory which outlines international sources of legitimacy for a given state. It theorizes in the international sources of political legitimacy. Political legitimacy, as described previously, has been traditionally conceptualized as stemming from domestic sources. By extending literature on the source of legitimacy of states to include international political actors, we provide a theoretical outline on the impact of international relations on political legitimacy.

We examine ways in which the legitimacy of a state may be affected through international (non-domestic) sources. An external political body can increase or reduce the degree of legitimacy of a state’s rule through affecting the state’s internal capacity or external acceptability. Specifically, we theorize that external political bodies - either an external state or global governance institution – may employ two types of mechanisms under their authority, which may affect the legitimacy of a given state. These mechanisms include (i) direct intervention, and (ii) diplomacy. Direct intervention affects the domestic coercive capacity of the state and diplomacy affects its international acceptability. Both these affect the legitimacy of the state.

For the mechanism of intervention, the external political body bestows an increased (or decreased) ability for a state to wield its political authority domestically. External intervention may increase state capacity, allowing the state to wield more political authority and coercive power over its citizens. For the mechanism of diplomacy, the external political body fosters or limits international acceptability for that state, giving it (or taking away) legitimacy in the eyes of the world around it. This could be through facilitating or blocking its membership in international bodies. An example of facilitation could be countries lobbying for Bangladesh’s membership to the United Nations (UN) following its freedom struggle. On the contrary, the opposition to Kosovo’s independence by many states has diminished its international acceptability, relegating the nation to an observer state of the UN. International acceptability fosters a state’s ability to enter into the global trading and fiscal systems as well as open up more possibilities for diplomatic relations. Ultimately, international

acceptability legitimizes a state's rule externally and membership in international bodies grants it some degree of protection from other states and non-state actors.

Global governance institutions (UN, IRC, International Criminal Court, etc) can be seen as vehicles for states to influence direct intervention or diplomatic tactics against another state. At times, a state may move a global governance institution to intervene in a political situation. Alternatively, the institution may call for member states to take action on the same. Especially when employing the mechanism of diplomacy, the process for a state to facilitate international acceptability of another state is usually through global governance institutions such as the UN.

Across these two mechanisms of intervention and diplomacy, external states and global governance institutions essentially perform roles which are either indiscernible from each other or highly interconnected. For example, an external state might choose to not recognize or back another state in the UN – a global governance institution – as a means to affect that state's diplomatic power. Alternatively, a global governance institution might employ an external state to utilize the mechanism of intervention against another state – for example, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) might permit declarations of intervention by other states. Essentially, our argument affirms that the source of international legitimacy stems from an external political body's mechanisms of intervention or diplomacy.

In the next section, we put forth three contemporary case studies, which illustrate how external political bodies may influence the legitimacy of another country through the mechanisms of intervention and diplomacy.

#### Case studies

##### *Bangladesh, 1971: External state intervention*

In 1971, East Pakistan erupted into tensions along ethno-linguistic lines stemming from the deliberate underrepresentation of the numerically stronger Bengali ethnicity in the national government at Islamabad, which was based in West Pakistan. The Awami League (a pro-Bengali party), which had won the democratic national elections, were barred from taking power by the West Pakistani and Punjabi dominated national military and government (Raghavan 2013). Many leaders were imprisoned, which led to the inception of the Mukti Bahini – guerrilla militia of Bengali separatist forces. It was amidst this tension that Yahya Khan, the then President of Pakistan, ordered Operation Searchlight, thereby sparking a slew of violence termed by some as a genocide (Beachler 2007). At this point, many leaders of the Awami League reached out to the Indian government for assistance (Raghavan 2013). It is clear from this case that the Awami League and its government did not have enough domestic coercive capacity to hold out against the West Pakistani forces.

Prompted by the leaders of the resistance reaching out to India for help and the violence against Bengalis, the Indian Government decided to intervene. By April of 1971, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the preparations for an armed intervention in East Pakistan in response to Operation Searchlight; by November Mukti Bahini forces trained and supported by the Indian armed forces had launched sizable offenses into East Pakistan (Sisson and Rose 1990).

India – an external state – had intervened in the matters of legitimacy of another state. India's subsequent recognition of independent Bangladesh on December 6th and formal declaration of war is an example of an external state utilizing the mechanism of intervention, to affect the legitimacy of another country.

This intervention granted the provisional government of Bangladesh (in exile in India) an increased grasp on their political authority – most notably with a trained defense force. The impact of the increased domestic political authority granted by India's intervention can be affirmed from two points (i) the preemptive preparations for an operation by Pakistani forces on India's *Western* frontier – India's border with West Pakistan (not Bangladesh) indicated that Indian intervention was notable enough for Pakistan to prepare for measures of negotiations with the *Indian* government rather than the Bangladeshi provisional government or Mukti Bahini leaders; (ii) the instrument of surrender signed by Pakistani forces was signed by both the Bangladeshi provisional government and the Indian armed forces, giving indication on the importance of India's role in granting legitimacy to Bangladesh. These points affirm the importance of the mechanism of intervention by an external state – India – to the legitimization of rule internally for Bangladesh. Therefore, we can highlight the existence of a source of political legitimacy stemming from international sources, particularly the intervention by an external political body.

##### *Afghanistan, 2021: External diplomatic de-legitimization*

In the Fall of 2021, the Taliban – a radically conservative Islamic group – took control of a significant part of Afghanistan. The Taliban's extreme crackdown in the country has resulted in a high level of reported human rights violations (Human Rights Watch 2023). A stark example of this is the status of women under the Taliban rule: fundamental rights of education, movement, protection against exploitation and access to justice are denied to an extent where the UN has stressed that the situation may be classified as gender apartheid (United Nations 2023). Additionally, the Taliban's long history of sponsoring and abetting terrorists – most recently

Aimen al-Zawahiri – has increased concerns by the governments of other states, most notably the US (Mir 2023).

The Taliban utilizes large amounts of coercive force to repress resistance and attain a largely acquiescent population. A 2019 survey prior to the occupation of the Taliban shows that a mere 13.4% of Afghans had sympathy for the Taliban, illustrating a lack of willful obedience amongst its populace (Maizland 2023). Simultaneously however, the Taliban has largely been successful in attaining a monopoly over coercive capacity and fostering an acquiescent (if reluctantly so) populace, as surveys show that violent resistance in 2022 had decreased five-fold compared to a year ago (International Crisis Group 2022). Further, the Taliban claims to draw legitimacy from the integration of a theocratic civil and legal code derived from the religious texts of Islam known as Shari'a Law. This claim to state legitimacy through well-established religious sources would be what Max Weber would refer to as legitimacy via tradition (1946). However, in the case of the Taliban, while the state has successfully monopolized coercive capacity and claims traditional legitimacy, its sovereign rights and international acceptability are severely diminished. Not one state has extended de-jure recognition to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Saul 2021).

Diplomacy tactics have been used by a vast majority of states and global governance institutions to diminish the international acceptability of Afghanistan under Taliban rule. No state has de-jure diplomatic relations with the Taliban government. The Taliban not only is not recognised as a legitimate government in the UN but its leaders are also subjected to both US and EU sanctions. For example, since the takeover in 2021, the Biden administration in the US has frozen Afghan government reserves held in US bank accounts, barring the Taliban government from accessing billions of dollars (Stein 2021). Furthermore, while the pre-Taliban internationally accepted government was provided with large amounts of foreign aid- eight billion dollars, equivalent to 40% of Afghanistan's GDP – the diminished international acceptance of the Taliban government has isolated them from these benefits. Estimates suggest that Afghanistan's economy has deteriorated by 20-30% (Byrd 2022).

While one may argue that the legitimacy of the Afghan Taliban government is diminished due to their human rights violations - and therefore non-adherence to international moral cosmopolitanism concerns - it is worth pointing out that many countries have suffered from allegations of the same violations - without the consequent loss of legitimacy. In other words, the lack of international legitimacy of the Taliban in Afghanistan is not derived only from moral cosmopolitanism, but also from active diplomacy tactics by external states.

In accordance with the theory laid out in this paper, while the Taliban might have coercive capacity amongst its citizens, its diminished international acceptability has not only isolated the country and government from global fiscal and trade systems but also diminished its sovereign capacity. In other words, countries do not recognise the sovereign capacity of the Taliban government and hence they are often prone to breaches of sovereignty – for example Pakistani forces have carried out airstrikes against a faction of the Taliban, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Atlantic Council 2024).

The case study of Afghanistan elucidates the workings of the mechanism of diplomacy as a source of legitimacy. Particularly, it highlights the ability of this source of international legitimacy to diminish a state's international acceptability and thus its legitimacy.

#### *Yemen, 2014: External intervention and diplomatic legitimization*

In the previous case, we observed a situation where the international acceptability of a state was diminished by diplomatic mechanisms used by international actors. However, in Yemen we see the converse occurring - a state with limited coercive capacity, yet high international acceptability.

The situation in Yemen started with the ousting of longstanding president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who during the initial years of his rule remained popular and was responsible for the successful unification of the country. In the 2006 Yemeni elections, Saleh won 77.17 percent of the vote (AlJazeera 2006). While the democratic nature of this election was not without flaw, it was legitimate enough to affirm Saleh's influential role in Yemen politics (Edroos 2017). It is important to note that Saleh belonged to the minority Zyedi-Shia population of Yemen and was supported by a Zyedi political organization/militia - the Houthis in their initial years. After significant gaps in Saleh's leadership and growing concerns of corruption and poor economic management emerged, the Houthis supported protests against his leadership (Edroos 2017). As Saleh warmed up to the Gulf Cooperation Council and the West to hold onto power, the divide between the Houthis and his rule grew. While he stepped down after an assassination attempt on June 3rd 2011, he was granted immunity by his Vice president-Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi- who inherited the office (Edroos 2017). With the election of a Sunni president after Saleh, the existing religious cleavages between the Shias and Sunnis deepened. Intense demographic cleavages, corrupt and incompetent governance, and a President who was deeply unpopular with significant portions of the country gave rise to the popularity of the Houthi movement (AlJazeera 2015). The situation soon developed into lawlessness. These conditions gave way to the Yemeni civil war. By September

2014, the Houthis had taken control of the capital, Sana'a, and by early 2015, they forced President Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia (Glenn 2022).

As things stand today, the Houthis control the former capital of Sana'a, large sectors of the coastland and all of the former country of North Yemen (apart the eastern Marib governorate) (Swinhoe 2024). In these territories, the coercive capacity of the Houthis is strong with large portions of taxation and public funds allocated towards financing militaristic activities (Al-Batati 2023). While in terms of territory they control less than half of the country, the Houthis reap the benefits of controlling most major cities (Anadolu Ajansi 2021). Comparatively, the Hadi government has largely had to operate in exile and often relies on Saudi Arabia and the UAE for even basic logistical operations (Agence France-Presse 2022). Furthermore, the territories controlled by the Hadi government are largely rural and have large amounts of terrorist insurgencies, mainly ISIS and Al-Qaeda (Anadolu Ajansi 2021).

Per conventional wisdom, the Hadi government should have diminished legitimacy as they do not hold sufficient coercive capacity over the country to be considered its legitimate ruler - at least not in its entirety. Yet, as things stand, the UN and the international world recognize the Hadi backed government as the sole legitimate government of Yemen - based on UN membership as well as external acceptance (Batati 2021). This is due to the support of external states with strong legitimacies of their own. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the US are three major countries which have extended vast diplomatic support to the government in exile (Batati 2021; Center for Preventive Action 2024). Most starkly, the Saudis have allowed the government in exile to operate from within their borders and have facilitated the ability for their diplomats to represent Yemen at the UN (Al-Monitor 2021). The US, UAE, and Saudi also initiated militaristic intervention to improve the capacity of the Hadi government (Byman 2017; Robinson 2023). Despite the comparative failure of these interventions in increasing coercive capacity, we see the effects of diplomacy increasing the legitimacy of the Hadi government through diplomacy.

To encapsulate the role of diplomacy here, we see a government with limited coercive capacity being granted equivalent international acceptability as a fully functional government by virtue of strong external political actors acting as sources of international acceptability, and by extension legitimacy. As an example, the international legitimacy conferred by external acceptability allows Yemen to continue to trade in oil. Controlled by the Hadi government, Yemen still managed to account for an export value of \$992M in 2022 (Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d.). On the other hand, the Houthis face heavy economic sanctions by the international world, specifically the UK and US (Government of UK 2024). Due to strong international sources of legitimacy, the Hadi government benefits from widespread legitimacy while the Houthis suffer the consequences of diminished international acceptability even with a high coercive capacity. In accordance with the theory outlined in this paper, international sources of legitimacy have legitimized the rule of the Yemeni government in exile externally via the mechanism of diplomacy leading to international acceptance.

### **III. Discussion**

In this paper, we argued that the sources of political legitimacy extend beyond the conventional domestic channels of descriptive and normative legitimacy. We theorize that international political actors - an external state and/or a global governance institution - can employ mechanisms of diplomacy and/or intervention to expand or diminish another state's legitimacy. The mechanism of intervention works on altering a state's coercive capacity, altering its ability to wield authority over its citizen, and therefore affecting its legitimacy internally. The mechanism of diplomacy works on the principle of altering a state's international acceptability and its ability to both enter global fiscal and trade systems as well as benefit from membership in international organizations - therefore affecting its legitimacy externally. For example, an internationally unrecognized state may not be able to receive foreign aid from the IMF or sell its natural resources to other states.

To encapsulate the findings of our case studies, we see evidence for our theory play out in the following ways. In one instance a popular revolutionary movement's legitimacy was enhanced by virtue of intervention of another state - here we can observe a domestic government which neither had coercive capacity nor international legitimacy attain both through the mechanisms of an external state's intervention. Initially Bangladesh relied on India's coercive capacity to attain its own. This is evident through the observation that Awami League leaders reached out to India and the resistance dependent on military training provided by India. In our second case we see a government that has coercive capacity and negligible domestic resistance to its rule having diminished international acceptability by virtue of diplomatic measures taken by international actors. Despite the Taliban's successful monopoly over coercive violence within Afghanistan, not one government has recognized its legitimacy externally. In our third case study we look at a situation where two political entities lay claim and control to a land. The Houthis with arguably more coercive capacity - control of major cities, no terrorist insurgencies, control over the capital - have very limited international acceptability. The Hadi government, backed by the Saudis, the US, and the UAE, is recognised by the international community at large and retains delegation to UN, despite having less coercive capacity. Here we can see a state with subpar

coercive capacity being internationally accepted and considered the legitimate ruler of Yemen due to the mechanisms of diplomacy used by powerful international sources which support the regime.

In these examples we can see one fundamental assertion, that a state's legitimacy might be influenced by international players. Mechanisms of intervention and diplomacy used by another state (and/or a global governance institution) affect - positively or negatively- its coercive capacity domestically, its claims of sovereignty, and its international acceptability and integration into the international community.

Oftentimes the mechanisms listed in the theories listed in this paper work in tandem with one another. A state can utilize both mechanisms or use one mechanism to justify the usage of another in an attempt to bestow (or take away) legitimacy upon a state. For example, in Yemen, both mechanisms of intervention and diplomacy are used by the allies of the Hadi-government to achieve both extended coercive capacity and high international acceptability of the government- and essentially re-take control of Yemen under the internationally recognised government. Furthermore, the mechanism of intervention in the form of attacks on Houthi controlled territory by the external actors are justified by using the mechanism of diplomacy. The Saudi-led coalition defends its attacks citing claims derived from legitimacy - that the attack on Houthis is to restore the internationally recognized government back in power (AlJazeera 2019). A common thread between these mechanisms is that an international actor(s) can be a source of legitimacy for a state.

Existing literature tends to view the sources of legitimacy through a domestic lens. Both descriptive and normative legitimacy provide us with an understanding on how legitimacy is conferred. They are founded on the idea of coercive capacity and justification of power. Existing discussions on international legitimacy stem from an understanding of moral cosmopolitan commitments. Another argument in existing literature is that these organizations attain their legitimacy through the legitimacy of the states which back them. The theory elucidated in this paper highlights the need to expand our understanding of the role of the international world in the context of state legitimacy. Through our case studies we can conclude that powerful states not only have an impact on the legitimacy of global governance institutions but rather on other states as well.

Furthermore, since global governance institutions are backed by powerful states they too act as a source and/or a means to affect the legitimacy of a state. Both external states and global governance institutions have the capacity to influence a state's coercive capacity and international acceptability, which affect the state's legitimacy both within its domestic public as well as the international world. Therefore, we need to augment and update our theoretical understanding of legitimacy to include international sources of legitimacy alongside the well-established domestic ones.

We stress the importance of this theory as a bridge between practical applications in international relations, such as foreign aid, UN membership, sanctions, and theory pertaining to state legitimacy. Understanding the mechanisms that can extend or diminish a state's legitimacy by international actors can help policymakers and diplomats in reaching their strategic goals. Further, a study of their consequences may provide the foundation for reaching a consensus in creating international standards to regulate the use of these mechanisms. As affirmed by our case studies, these mechanisms affect a country deeply and having a theoretical consensus on the same can help the international community use them to uphold and protect moral cosmopolitan commitments.

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