



## AP Government & Politics: Comparative 1999 Sample Student Responses

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In the large majority of states, the three critical factors governing political legitimacy are political stability, economic prosperity, and the existence of a national identity. Nigeria ~~has not been able~~, in recent years, has been able to achieve none of these. It has been politically unstable, economically desperate, and has no true national identity or political culture.

Political stability is necessary for legitimacy as any gov't which wishes to become legitimate must at least remain in existence for an extended period of time. Constant revolutions and civil conflicts only ~~increase~~ increase antagonism to the gov't. Nigeria, in turn, suffers horribly in this respect. Its gov't has been characterized by a series of military dictatorships established through coups (i.e. those of Gowon, Obasanjo, Babangida, Abacha) and interspersed w/ abortive republics (i.e. under Bakula following the end of colonialism and under Shagari after Obasanjo's voluntary renunciation of power). No lasting format has been created, no institutions left in place long enough to become revered. Thus, Nigeria's instability has undermined its legitimacy.

Economic prosperity is also critical to the establishment of a legitimate gov't as only when prosperous will citizens be willing to accept the existing gov't. Poverty

thus, leads to revolution. Nigeria, in this respect also, is utterly destitute. The transition to an oil economy has made the Nigerian economy dependant upon the price of oil (low in recent years) and robbed Nigeria of its self-sufficiency. The parastatals which the gov't. created to expand the economy have proved corrupt and inefficient while the SAPs enforced by the World Bank and the IMF have only hurt the economy. Finally, a system of probendalism has made nearly impossible the establishment of a true meritocracy in the economy.

Lastly, a national identity or political culture is absolutely necessary in order to bring about legitimacy as it provides a rallying point, a goal for which all sectors of the population can strive. This sense of national unity, then, will in turn help the other two factors. Nigeria, though, lacks this as it lacks all else. Ethnic and religious differences have caused an utter lack of national unity, to the point of civil war. The three major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba) struggle for control and sacrifice Nigeria.

Thus, Nigeria is now in desperate straits. Its gov't. lacks all the major factors of legitimate regimes. Still, it remains to be seen whether

The soon-to-be-inaugurated presidency of  
Obasanjo can reverse these trends.

In government, the concept of 'legitimacy' is perhaps the most important concept of all.

Legitimacy is accomplished through many factors, but three major attributes would have to be the Rule of Law, the Desire of the masses and Citizen confidence in the government.

The Rule of law is an essential part to government legitimacy. It establishes a system by which the government as well as the people must abide by. Furthermore it states that the government must follow certain procedure in order for its actions to be considered legal and viable. An example of this would be the 'due processes' clause in the United States system, which states that the government must follow these procedures in order for its actions to be considered legal. In the US no one can be properly arrested or held in jail without being given the proper "due processes" of law. In developing countries such as Nigeria, the concept of due process doesn't exist. The government can arrest and execute individuals without giving them a trial or any other form of legal protection. Because this does not exist it greatly undermines the legitimacy of government actions, and makes the government corrupt and unjust in the eyes of its people. Another important aspect of

Legitimacy is the concept of "support of the masses" or voting. In other words that the present government in power is there because it's citizens want it to be there. In

Britain the government has legitimacy because every election year the British citizens vote it in, ~~so~~ expressing their desire for it's existence. In a military dictatorship the people do not vote the government in. And if they do, it is because that choice is the only choice. This undermines the government's legitimacy because it is not supported by the masses that it supposedly represents.

~~Legitimacy~~ Legitimacy can also be found in citizen confidence. If the citizens of a country believe in their government, in it's laws, rules and in the fact that they have rights in this institution, then government has legitimacy. Every US citizen knows that the government will not take away ~~the~~ their delegated rights. They also know that they can fight their government in a court of law and have the potential to win. And they know that they can go to bed at night and wake up in the morning without fear of being beaten and thrown in jail in the middle of the night. In Nigeria such confidence does not exist. The government owes you absolutely nothing and you cannot

contribute it on equal grounds. The citizens' lack of confidence in their government takes away its legitimacy because the citizens don't believe, trust or support it, in Nigeria, instead they simply fear it.

In Nigeria the government has little if no legitimacy with its people. Since it is a military dictatorship it does not account to them for its actions, and in response the people don't support and therefore it has no really existing legitimacy.

Political legitimacy is one of the most important parts of a government. Without it, the people feel unrepresented and, often, poorly treated. Many factors contribute to the political legitimacy. Three such factors are elections, improvement, and peace among the people. These three will be discussed in relation to India.

Elections are essential in most governments for political legitimacy. The reason this is a factor is that elections show the will of the people. If the people are willing to elect a certain government, it is the one they want and has legitimacy. If a government loses legitimacy or the people are no longer satisfied with it, elections are their vehicle for kicking the government peacefully out of office. India has elections, thereby showing one aspect of legitimacy in its government.

Improvement, especially economically and technologically, <sup>are</sup> also important for political legitimacy. By improving a country in these ways, the government shows it cares enough about the people and citizens of the country to try to help them out. A government doing this in the right ways is probably legitimate. While India is trying to do this, it has proven difficult to improve the economic state of India. More than 300 million of their more than 900 million people live in poverty according to their standards. The Indian government is working to improve things still in order to maintain legitimacy.



Peace among the people is a third way to judge the legitimacy of a government. If the people are peaceful and satisfied, their government is probably doing a good enough job for them. This peaceful environment probably suggests that their government is doing a good enough job for them. It is only when people are dissatisfied and their needs aren't being met that they begin to revolt and view their government as illegitimate. India has a problem with this aspect of political legitimacy. The people are constantly in a state of turmoil. Few Indian citizens feel their needs are being met by their government. The present legitimacy of India is in question.