

Standing Group Political Regimes -  
Società Italiana di Scienza Politica (SISP)

# Political regimes and their search for legitimacy

06 June 2025, Department of Social and Political Sciences,  
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## Call for Papers

The Standing Group Political Regimes of the Italian Political Science Association (SISP) organises a **one-day workshop** on the modalities and instruments that regimes and their leaderships use in order to be perceived as legitimate by their citizens. The morning session will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of new papers, whereas the afternoon session will host a **public lecture** by dr. **Johannes Gerschewski** (WZB Berlin Social Science Center).

Although scholars maintain that no regime, be it democratic or autocratic, can survive in power without at least some passive acceptance by large segments of the population and, even more crucially, by politically and economically influential groups, they often eschew the issue of how regimes legitimise themselves in the back of their analyses. This happens for different reasons in the two worlds that the classic dichotomization of political regimes creates. Whilst the electoral moment that provides the vertical linkage between the rulers and the ruled is seen as the legitimizing mechanism par excellence in democracies, the fact that autocracies may enjoy significant and sincere popular and elite support is hard to fathom for some Western scholars. The workshop challenges these two (often) implicit assumptions. It does so by reflecting on how, when, and through which tools political regimes' leaderships claim and sustain their legitimacy. Contributors are asked to reflect on what regimes "say" and "do" as well as on what citizens and key organized interests, groups, and classes "understand" and "counter-do". In this complex and dialectic process, ideology owns a special place. How regimes rearticulate global intellectual trends, national cultural idioms, religious beliefs and common sense into a legitimizing narrative is thereby at the core of the interest of the workshop. But so are legitimation strategies which leverage the regime's capacity to deliver social and public goods, the qualities of the leadership, as well as electoral practices themselves.

Accordingly, we welcome **paper proposals** addressing one or more issues from the following (non-exhaustive) list:

- The concept of legitimacy
- The instruments (ideologies, socio-economic performance, sport events, personal traits, international roles) leveraged by a regime to claim and sustain its right to rule
- The role of old and new media in supporting and limiting regime legitimacy
- How citizens and organized groups receive, reshape, and challenge regimes' narratives

Researchers who wish to participate are invited to submit their paper proposals (max 350 words) via this online form [forms.gle/CVaR5hthfStyx6WG7](https://forms.gle/CVaR5hthfStyx6WG7) by **15 March 2025**. Only a limited number of papers will be selected and priority will be given to proposals submitted by early-career scholars (PhD students, post-docs, etc.) and to projects that are already at an advanced stage of development. Thanks to Società Italiana di Scienza Politica/Italian Political Science Association (SISP), we can provide grants, up to 200 euros each, to support the participation of early-career scholars.