

Endogenous Political Legitimacy: The Tudor Roots of England's Constitutional Governance

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This paper highlights the importance of endogenous changes in the foundations of legitimacy for political regimes. It focuses on the central role of legitimacy changes in the rise of constitutional monarchy in England. It first defines legitimacy and briefly elaborates a theoretical framework enabling a historical study of this unobservable variable. It proceeds to substantiate that the low-legitimacy, post-Reformation Tudor monarchs promoted Parliament to enhance their legitimacy, thereby changing the legislative process from the “crown and Parliament” to the “crown in Parliament” that still prevails in England. The break with Rome permanently altered England’s political development.

The emergence of constitutional monarchy in England was a watershed in the history of political economy. This paper establishes the importance of *political legitimacy* in this transition and shows that it was well on its way in the *sixteenth century*. These two conclusions differ from a large literature in the social sciences that claims that Parliament’s *military superiority*—and the constitutional reforms it made credible—led to the transition in the *seventeenth century* (North and Weingast 1989; Brenner 1993; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005; Acemoglu and

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We are grateful for comments received from Bishnu Gupta, two referees, and participants at workshops at Cal Tech, Cambridge University, Duke University, Harvard University, University of Chicago, Chapman University, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, Rutgers University, University of Washington, Martin Luther Universität, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, All-UC Economic History Meetings, the Economic History Association Meetings, and the SIOE Meetings. Lee Alston, Robert Barro, Dan Bogart, Michael Bordo, Paul David, Brad DeLong, Tracy Dennison, Jim Fearon, Phil Hoffman, Timur Kuran, David Laitin, Weijia Li, Rachel McCleary, Joel Mokyr, Nathan Nunn, Mordecai Kurz, Martha Olney, Steven Quinn, Alvin Rabushka, Eric Rasmusen, Gérard Roland, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, Daniel Stegmüller, Daniel Trefler, Barry Weingast, and Eugene White provided extremely useful comments. We thank Benedict Adler Bolton for his contribution to this research. All errors are ours.

Robinson 2012; Cox 2012).¹ This paper's goal, however, is not to dismiss the importance of the seventeenth-century military events but to draw attention to the important role of political legitimacy in the English transition.²

What is political legitimacy? An authority is legitimate to the extent that her subjects have internalized the beliefs that she has the right to govern and that they have the moral obligation to obey. Legitimacy is thus a continuous variable, and the more an authority's subjects internalize that she is legitimate, the more legitimate she is. Moreover, because obedience exhibits strategic complementarities, the more each subject believes that others consider the authority legitimate, the more likely they are to behave as if they consider the authority legitimate. An authority is thus legitimate when it is common knowledge that her subjects have internalized the belief that she has the right to govern and her subjects have a moral obligation to obey.

Gaining legitimacy thus requires managing beliefs, and analyses of legitimacy must be belief-focused. Within political science, however, the traditional approach to analyzing political legitimacy is performance-based, not belief-based (Lipset 1959; Rogowski 1974; Weatherford 1992; Gilley 2006; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009).³ Such studies tend to view legitimacy as a historically *constant* and *exogenously* given variable.

This paper therefore begins by briefly elaborating on a framework to study *belief*-based, *endogenous* legitimacy. Our framework yields, among other insights, the intuitive proposition that a low-legitimacy authority would be particularly interested in gaining additional legitimacy by cooperating with strong *legitimizing agents*, whose public behaviors influence the legitimacy beliefs held by others. Over time, such cooperation can lead to the internalization of the legitimacy of the authority and her legitimizing agents in their respected roles. Although both authorities and their agents benefit from cooperation, when their preferences become sufficiently unaligned (perhaps due to the ascension of a new dynasty), authorities may seek alternative means of legitimation. This can lead to a *legitimacy conflict*, whereby the central point of contention is who the appropriate legitimizing agents are (and therefore who has political power). Moreover, the identity of the agents (i.e., their preferences) and their political bargaining power play an important

¹ We summarize this literature and some of its deficiencies in Greif and Rubin (2024b).

² Due to length considerations, this paper abstracts away from several important and interrelated issues, including the role of administration (Brewer 1990; Greif 2008; Cox 2011), social conflict (Hill 1972; Stone 2002), and the importance of newly formed political parties (Pincus 2009).

³ Some notable exceptions include Hurd (1999) and Tyler (2006).

role in determining political economy outcomes. Hence, we expect societies to have different political and economic outcomes based (in part) on how authorities legitimate their rule and who they choose as agents.

The second—and primary—section of this paper evaluates the relevance of this insight for the development of constitutional monarchy in sixteenth-century England. It establishes that the Tudor monarchs (1485–1603) had low legitimacy by the prevailing legitimacy principle of hereditary monarchy; they recognized this situation; they initially turned to the pope for legitimation but after the Reformation relied on legitimation by Parliament. In short, an unanticipated (though by no means exogenous) event—the break with the Catholic Church—incited the English crown to seek an *alternative form of legitimacy*, which was provided by Parliament. Moreover, given the initial low legitimating power of Parliament (particularly the House of Commons), the Tudors labored to promote Parliament's legitimating power, even if doing so gave Parliament more influence over political decision-making. The Tudors did this in various ways, such as increasing its size and relying on acts of Parliament in new policy domains such as succession. Perhaps most importantly, the post-Reformation Tudors changed the legislative process from the *crown and Parliament* to the *crown in Parliament* legitimacy principle that still prevails in England.⁴ The crown still declares new laws, but the crown publicly states that acts are enacted by the authority of Parliament composed of the crown, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons.

The paper concludes by asserting the benefit of studying an authority's political efficacy while recognizing that both power and legitimacy matter. In the context of early modern England, the low legitimacy Tudors of the sixteenth century cooperated with and strengthened Parliament's legitimating power, while the opposite was true under the seventeenth-century Stuart monarchy. Parliament was too strong of a legitimating agent, given the high legitimacy of the Stuarts. The resulting *legitimacy conflict* manifested itself, among other ways, in the seventeenth-century military conflicts, the legitimacy principles the Stuarts advocated, their religious policies, and the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In sum, this paper introduces a conceptual framework for analyzing political legitimacy and demonstrates its usefulness by examining the role of legitimacy in England's political transition.

⁴ The argument that some degree of the rule of law was established and manifested in the crown in Parliament has been argued by Tudor historians, particularly Elton (1953, 1974a, 1974b, 1982, 1991) and his many followers (e.g., Lehmborg 1970, 1977; Goldsworthy 1999; Zaller 2007).

LEGITIMACY, ITS FOUNDATIONS, AND ENDOGENOUS CHANGES

Can integrating legitimacy into the study of England's political history enhance our comprehension of its transition to a constitutional monarchy? Before addressing this question, this section defines legitimacy and presents its relations to related concepts.⁵

Political Legitimacy: A Belief-Based Definition

An authority is considered *legitimate* by a particular subject if that subject accepts the morality of her rule and thus his moral obligation to comply with her policies. An authority is more legitimate the more subjects consider her legitimate and the stronger their moral commitment to comply. Because intrinsic beliefs are unobservable, however, they are not the only type of beliefs that contribute to an authority's (perceived) legitimacy. Some subjects behave as if they believe in the legitimacy of an authority because they believe that others believe in the legitimacy of the authority.

Such *common knowledge* regarding legitimacy beliefs matter because subjects' best responses are strategic complements. The more one expects others to comply, the greater the gain from compliance. Hence, it is not necessary for the entire population to view the ruler as legitimate for the population to act as if they do. If enough of the population views the ruler as legitimate, a shared belief regarding the ruler's legitimacy can prevail. An authority's (perceived) legitimacy thus depends on managing shared, commonly known beliefs about her legitimacy and the legitimacy of her actions. Over time, perception and reality can converge as people internalize patterns of behavior.

Political legitimacy can be *personal* or *action-based*. Personal legitimacy is the extent to which an authority is viewed as legitimate. Action-based legitimacy is the extent to which an action taken by a particular entity is viewed as legitimate. We denote the set of policies that must be consented to by a specific agent for the policy to have action-based legitimacy as that agent's *legitimacy domain*. For instance, some policies were legitimate for a pre-seventeenth-century English monarch to enact on her own based on royal prerogative⁶ (e.g., determining royal marriages), while other policies could only be legitimated by an act of Parliament (e.g., direct taxation).

⁵ For further elaboration, see Greif and Rubin (2024a).

⁶ Royal prerogatives are customary privileges held by monarchs that do not require Parliament's consent.

Action-based legitimacy is different from legality. An action can be legal but illegitimate, illegal but legitimate, or legal and legitimate. This distinction is important in the case under study because, in the buildup to the Civil Wars, Charles I levied several fees, notably ship money, that had medieval precedents and were therefore a prerogative of the monarchy.⁷ But these fees were widely considered illegitimate, as they had not been imposed for centuries and had thus fallen outside of his legitimacy domain.

Legitimacy is also different from state capacity: the “ability of a state to collect taxes, enforce law and order, and provide public goods” (Johnson and Koyama 2017, p. 2). The two are clearly related: legitimacy reduces the cost of governance and thus improves state capacity, though merely having state capacity does not make an authority legitimate. Hence, state capacity is a function of legitimacy. But the two are distinguishable, both empirically and conceptually. This is because state capacity is *also* a function of other inputs, such as administrative institutions. This means that a political authority with a weak administrative apparatus may be highly legitimate but have low state capacity. For instance, nearly every medieval European king had low state capacity, regardless of his legitimacy.

Legitimacy fosters an authority's efficacy because it reduces governance costs. A political authority is more effective the more her subjects comply with her policies. Compliance is an issue whenever an authority demands actions that are costly to a subject (e.g., taxation). Authorities thus generally invest in the capacity to punish non-compliance. Motivating compliance through punishment is costly, however, even if it is not practiced. Legitimacy, in contrast, induces compliance based on intrinsic motivation. In general, power and legitimacy are substitutes and co-exist, and although legitimacy is not the sole basis for political authority, it can be crucial for a regime's effectiveness and longevity.

Did English Monarchs Care about Their Legitimacy?

How can we know that legitimacy matters to English monarchs? The general principle of managing shared beliefs is well known. Public events—such as coronations—during which one is exposed to information relevant to the belief-formation process are crucial. The public nature of such events makes one aware that all others have been exposed to the same information as well (Kuran 1995; Chwe 2001).

⁷ Ship money was among the old royal prerogatives aimed at facilitating the quick mobilization of naval forces in times of emergency. Ship money was initially successful because the crown had the legitimate right to collect it in times of emergency. However, collecting regular taxation required approval by Parliament. Otherwise, it was not considered legitimate since it did not follow the law.

In general, legitimacy is non-observable, and this frustrates comparative statics analyses in which legitimacy is either the dependent or independent variable. However, the content and timing of publicly observable events provide an alternative, particularly in past societies in which we could neither conduct surveys nor administer randomized experiments.

Choices made by English monarchs since 1066 reveal that they cared about their legitimacy and tried to manage shared beliefs regarding it. When an English monarch died, members of their inner circle immediately declared a new monarch. Although the decision was made public, the event was private and presumably had limited impact on shared beliefs. A second event, the coronation ceremony, was public. It transpired over several days and was held in highly visible and symbolic locations. During the coronation ceremony, the new monarch's legitimacy was recognized by subjects deemed important. The coronation thus provided an opportunity to manage shared beliefs.

Coronation ceremonies can foster shared beliefs regarding *both* power and legitimacy. But because England had long been a hereditary monarchy in which the right to the crown passed from father to his oldest surviving son (born in wedlock), coronations can reveal that legitimacy mattered to English monarchs. If legitimacy mattered, those with a lower legitimacy endowment—non-adult male heirs—should have had more to gain by holding earlier coronations. A non-adult male heir had more to gain by quickly creating shared beliefs regarding their legitimacy.⁸ If English monarchical authority was based only on power (resources), adult male heirs and other heirs would have been equally motivated to hold the ceremony as soon as possible. In contrast, if legitimacy contributed to their authority, heirs who were not the adult sons of the previous monarch would rush to be coronated.

The data confirm that this was the case. Table 1 shows the days between the monarch's accession to the throne and their coronation since 1066. The data separate adult male heirs of the previous monarch from all other heirs. It took an average of 84.3 days for a non-adult male heir to hold a coronation ceremony, while it took adult male heirs 242.2 days, on average, to do so. Prior to the Glorious Revolution, which initiated a period of "Parliamentary supremacy" whereby Parliament was the dominant political force and in which securing legitimacy may have been more important for monarchs, the data also shows a substantial difference in the days to coronation between adult male heirs (164.0 days) and

⁸ By "heir," we mean the legitimate (born in wedlock) son of the previous monarch. Non-adult male heirs thus include males who established new monarchical lineages, such as William I, Henry VII, and James I.

TABLE I
DAYS TO CORONATION OF ENGLISH MONARCHS, 1066–PRESENT

Adult Male Heirs			Child Monarchs, Females, and Non-heirs		
Monarch	Reign	Days to Coronation	Monarch	Reign	Days to Coronation
William II	1087–1100	17	William I	1066–1087	0
Henry I	1100–1135	3	Stephen	1135–1154	0
Richard I	1189–1199	59	Henry II	1154–1189	0
John	1199–1216	51	Henry III	1216–1272	10
Edward I	1272–1307	641	Edward III	1327–1377	12
Edward II	1307–1327	233	Richard II	1377–1399	24
Henry V	1413–1422	19	Henry IV	1399–1413	13
Henry VIII	1509–1547	64	Edward IV	1461–1483	116
Charles I	1625–1649	312	Richard III	1483–1485	10
Charles II	1660–1685	329	Henry VII	1485–1509	69
James II	1685–1688	76	Edward VI	1547–1553	23
George II	1727–1760	122	Mary I	1553–1558	104
George III	1760–1820	332	Elizabeth I	1558–1603	59
George IV	1820–1830	537	James I	1603–1625	123
William IV	1830–1837	439	William III & Mary II	1688–1702	57
Edward VII	1901–1910	564	Anne I	1702–1714	46
George V	1910–1936	412	George I	1714–1727	80
George VI	1936–1952	152	Victoria	1837–1901	373
Charles III	2022–	240	Elizabeth II	1952–2022	482
Average (Overall)		242.2	Average (Overall)		84.3
Average (pre-1689)		164.0	Average (pre-1689)		40.2

Notes: Adult male heirs were men who were 17 or older at time of succession to the throne, and their father (mother) was the previous monarch. Henry VI ascended to the throne at nine months and we do not include him. Also excluded is the disputed reign of Matilda (1141) and the short reign of Edward VIII (1936); neither had a coronation. Charles II's reign dated from 29 May 1660, when he entered London, marking the first meeting of crown and Parliament since the crown was abolished in 1649.

Source: See various Wikipedia entries on each monarch.

non-adult male heirs (40.2 days). There are certainly many factors that contribute to the “days to coronation” metric, which is merely suggestive evidence that legitimacy may have mattered to English monarchs. Yet, this relationship has no meaning in a world where rule is based on power alone. Its meaning is clear in a world where legitimacy matters.

The details of various coronation ceremonies reaffirm that legitimacy mattered to claimants to the English crown. Legitimacy-weak rulers invested much to enhance the legitimating impact of their coronations. For instance, in 1399, Henry IV usurped the crown from Richard II. In need of legitimation, he added many new features to the coronation to give it a more spectacular aura. These included donning ceremonial robes (instead of dressing in white as a “humble suppliant”), lifting the Coronation chair on the scaffold for enthronement, using the Holy Oil of St. Thomas, and presenting himself as a “man of God” (Strong 2005, pp. 166, 169).

On the other hand, those who had a strong legitimate claim to the throne, based on the principle of hereditary monarchy, held modest ceremonies. Consider, for example, the coronation of Charles I (r. 1625–49), who was the first adult male heir to ascend to the English throne in over a century. Charles's ceremony was a relatively simple matter, and he did not even bother to enter London in a procession as was done by his father, James I, and the Tudor monarchs (Strong 2005, p. 267). In other words, Charles I did not feel that a public display promoting his legitimacy was necessary. He was the king by right and inheritance, and a coronation ceremony was held pro-forma only.

Legitimacy Principles: The Cultural and Institutional Foundations of Legitimacy

Our analytical and empirical strategy rests on the interplay between the cultural and institutional foundations of legitimacy. The cultural foundations of legitimacy specify the conditions necessary for a particular individual or organization to have legitimate authority or the legitimate capacity to enact policies in certain domains. For instance, in many monarchies, the eldest son of the previous king has the most legitimate claim to the throne. Meanwhile, in a democracy, the winner of a fair and free election has the right to rule. As these examples illustrate, the cultural foundations of legitimacy go well beyond simply specifying who has legitimate authority. They overlap with the cognitive structures that people use to comprehend the world around them (Greif and Mokyr 2017).

The institutional foundations of legitimacy are the means of fostering the shared beliefs that an authority satisfies these conditions. It specifies how one attains legitimacy, what institutional means one can employ to demonstrate or enhance their legitimacy, and the process through which policies must be formulated to be considered legitimate.

The cultural and institutional foundations of legitimacy together constitute a society's *legitimacy principle*. It articulates why a particular individual (or organization) has legitimate authority or action-based legitimacy (including the right to legitimate an authority or her action) and how she should establish legitimate authority in some policy domain. Like their constituting foundations, legitimacy principles are a product of historical development, and as such, they are history-dependent and society-specific. Using the conceptual framework developed in Greif (2006), legitimacy principles are commonly known as internalized beliefs (moral norms) and behavioral beliefs (expectations), complemented by

rules that guide and coordinate behavior, and a corresponding cognitive framework that justifies the distribution of political authority. Moreover, prevailing legitimacy principles are not necessarily unique. It is possible for several non-mutually exclusive legitimacy principles to co-exist. In the case of early modern England, as we shall discuss, the legitimacy principle of inherited monarchy coexisted, at different times, with legitimacy principles of Parliamentary (legal) legitimacy and the Divine Right of Kings.

Legitimizing Agents and Endogenous Legitimacy Principles

A particularly important (and observable) component of the institutional foundations of legitimacy is *legitimizing agents*, those whose actions and sayings influence *others'* beliefs.⁹ Although an authority can choose whomever she pleases to legitimate her, the effectiveness of a legitimating agent depends on satisfying two conditions. The first condition is that the agent is perceived as having the information, knowledge, and credentials necessary to make an informed decision regarding the legitimacy of the authority and her actions. Catholic cardinals legitimate a pope, high nobles legitimate a monarch, and electoral boards legitimate elected officials.

The second condition is that the agent is perceived as being able to refuse legitimating with relative impunity. Legitimizing agents must be sufficiently *independent* of the authority; yes-men and sidekicks are not kingmakers. Agents under the authority's thumb provide no new information about whether the authority (or her actions) satisfies the conditions necessary to legitimately rule, and they thus do little to affect shared beliefs in the authority's legitimacy. This logic leads to a counter-intuitive conclusion: yes-men and sidekicks can be particularly effective in *delegitimizing* the authority they rely upon. Because they are not independent, their condemnation of the authority is a strong signal that the authority (or her actions) is illegitimate, exactly because these agents have much to lose by declaring the authority illegitimate.

Legitimizing power can change endogenously when the authority changes her legitimating agent. The mere act of an authority requesting legitimacy enhances the power of the chosen agents to legitimate. It endows them with legitimating power in a particular policy domain. The request by the authority signals that she accepts that these agents

⁹ For more on the role of legitimating agents, see Coşgel, Miceli, and Rubin (2012) and Rubin (2017). *Coordinating* legitimacy agents influence shared behavioral beliefs but legitimating agents can also be moral authorities who directly affect moral beliefs (Greif and Schøyen 2024).

can recognize whether she and/or her actions are legitimate or not. For instance, when a king calls a session of Parliament to enact legislation, he thereby recognizes the legitimating power of Parliament's stamp of approval.

The reliance of an authority on legitimating agents influences the legitimacy of the authority and also impacts the distribution of *political power*—the power to influence political decisions or their execution. To reward legitimating agents while satisfying the previously noted conditions, an authority is likely to concede to them direct participation in *political decision-making* or *administrative control* that affects the execution of policies. The credibility of such concessions is achieved by the authority declaring that they are in the legitimacy domain of the agents. Hence, legitimating agents with legitimating power also gain the capacity to influence policies and/or their execution. The relations between an authority and her legitimating agents are therefore fundamentally those of *cooperation*, not conflict.

Legitimacy principles can change endogenously over time. As an integral component of a society's cultural heritage, the initial set of legitimacy principles is part of the conditions that impact an authority's initial choices. In the long run, however, an authority's choices can influence the distribution of legitimating power and, thus, political power. Legitimacy principles are prone to change in the long run.¹⁰

When will an authority seek to change the prevailing legitimacy principle by changing her legitimating agents? When will such change take place cooperatively and when will it be conflictual? Recall that legitimacy afforded by an effective legitimating agent increases compliance with a legitimate policy. Legitimacy generates a surplus, but it comes with a cost to the authority. The cost is that the authority must make policy compromises to accommodate the preferences of her legitimating agents. An authority faces a trade-off between compliance and compromise. A stronger (weaker) legitimating agent increases compliance by more (less) but can extract bigger (smaller) policy concessions from the authority.

The implications of this insight are intuitive. A low legitimacy authority would prefer a strong legitimating agent because, without such an agent, compliance would be minimal. If the agent is initially weak, the authority would benefit from increasing the agent's legitimating power. This can be done, for example, by increasing the immunity of that agent or publicly accepting the agent's legitimating rights.

¹⁰ Legitimacy principles are quasi-parameters (Greif and Laitin 2004; Greif 2006); they are exogenous in the short run and endogenous in the long run.

Such a process is cooperative, as both sides benefit, but its inverse is confrontational. When a legitimacy-strong authority inherits a strong legitimating agent, she prefers to weaken the agent. After all, the authority can achieve a high level of compliance without making any policy concessions to the agent. The agent, in turn, would seek to employ his legitimating power to protect it, thereby conflicting with the authority. A *legitimacy conflict* would transpire.

LEGITIMATION UNDER THE TUDORS (1485–1603)

Is the insight laid out in the previous section—that a legitimacy weak (strong) authority prefers having a strong (weak) legitimating agent, *ceteris paribus*—relevant to the transition to constitutional monarchy in England? This section presents evidence that it is. During the Tudor dynasty (1485–1603), there was an *endogenous* change in the legitimacy principle underpinning the authority of the monarchy. The low legitimacy of the Tudors motivated them to enhance their legitimacy and that of their policies by relying first on the pope. Following the Reformation, however, they turned to Parliament as their primary legitimating agent. They thus promoted Parliament's legitimating power through their actions and statements. The crown in Parliament became the ultimate legitimating body in England, and acts issued by Parliament (composed of the Commons, Lords, and crown) became the ultimate sources of statutory law and legitimate authority.

The Tudors' Legitimacy Challenge

Low personal legitimacy is a necessary condition for an authority to seek a strong legitimating agent. Did the sixteenth-century Tudors have weak personal legitimacy? The evidence indicates they had low legitimacy—much lower than the seventeenth-century Stuarts.

As previously discussed, the oldest legitimate son of the previous monarch was the most legitimate heir in pre-modern England. Under this principle, the Tudor monarchs had low personal legitimacy. The dynasty's founder, Henry Tudor (the future Henry VII), was not the son of the previous monarch but won the throne on the battlefield. He was born in 1457 during the Wars of the Roses (1455–85), fought between the royal houses of Lancaster and York. Henry was Lancastrian with a weak claim to the throne from his mother's side, while his father was Welsh, not English. Victories by Yorkist forces implied that, in 1471, Henry was among the last surviving Lancastrian claimants to the throne. Henry was

sent to safety in Brittany (France) but returned to England in 1485 and defeated the Yorkist King Richard III. Dethroning Richard III was arguably treason, although Henry claimed that he was a conqueror and thus not a traitor. He was fortunate that Richard III was neither legitimate nor popular; Richard was widely believed to have murdered the legitimate Yorkist heirs to the throne (the sons of his late brother, Edward IV).

Henry VII was aware of his legitimacy deficit. Even prior to defeating Richard III, he announced his intention to marry the daughter of the late Yorkist King Edward IV so that his son and heir would have bloodlines from both houses. Despite his efforts, Henry was repeatedly challenged for more than 20 years by pretenders who claimed to be the missing sons of Edward IV and thus had a stronger claim to the throne. Henry VII's low legitimacy cast a long shadow on his dynasty, while most of the other Tudors also had low legitimacy for other, idiosyncratic reasons. One was a child (Edward VI) and two were the first female monarchs in English history (Mary and Elizabeth).

It is possible to measure the legitimacy of each Tudor and Stuart monarch when they came to the throne using one exogenous and two endogenous proxies (Table 2). First, and perhaps most important, is the legitimacy associated with being the closest male (next-in-kin) adult heir of the previous monarch.¹¹ Adulthood smoothed royal transitions, as the new monarch could rule from day one rather than being subject to a regent. Among the Tudors, only one (Henry VIII) out of five monarchs satisfied this condition, while among the Stuarts to 1688, four out of four monarchs did (James I was the closest living male relative of Elizabeth and her chosen successor; James II was the brother of the previous king who had no legitimate children).

Two endogenous proxies of a ruler's legitimacy reveal the perception of contemporaries regarding the monarch's legitimacy. The first is days to coronation, which was discussed earlier. A higher number reveals that the monarch was more confident in their legitimacy. The Tudors seem to have been much less confident than the Stuarts; the average days to coronation for the Tudors was less than 64 days, while that of the Stuarts was 210 days.

The second proxy is whether a monarch's first Parliament passed an act of legitimacy. Such an act was a public event as, similar to all acts, it was widely circulated in the kingdom as an open letter and thus was common knowledge. Like the days to coronation proxy, a legitimacy act indicates weak personal legitimacy; it signifies the monarch's need for

¹¹ "Next in kin" is a less strict metric than "adult male heir" employed in Table 1. The latter implies that the individual is the son of the previous monarch.

TABLE 2
LEGITIMACY ATTRIBUTES OF THE TUDORS AND STUARTS

Monarch	Adult Male Heir (Next in Kin)	Days to Coronation	Legitimacy Act
Tudors			
Henry VII	No	69	No
Henry VIII	Yes	64	No
Edward VI	No	23	No
Mary I	No	104	Yes
Elizabeth I	No	59	Yes
<i>Average</i>		63.8	
Stuarts			
James I	Yes	123	Yes
Charles I	Yes	312	No
Charles II	Yes	329	Yes
James II	Yes	76	No
<i>Average</i>		210.0	
Post-1688			
William III & Mary II	No	57	Yes

Source: Authors' compilation.

Parliament's stamp of approval. It was first enacted to legitimize Mary I, the first female queen of England. It was later issued for Elizabeth I. In the seventeenth century, it was awarded to every monarch that Parliament brought to power: James I, Charles II, and William III and Mary II. A legitimating act was not issued to Charles I or James II, both of whom lost their thrones due to internal opposition led by Parliamentary supporters. These proxies, though not conclusive, suggest that the Tudors had low legitimacy, especially relative to the Stuarts.

Papal Legitimation and Its Demise

Relying on Parliament to be legitimate was not the Tudors' initial intention. The primary way that the first Tudor king, Henry VII (1485–1509), responded to his legitimacy deficit was by appealing to papal legitimation (Russell 1971, pp. 69–103). Responding to Henry's request, the pope sent him (in early 1486) a papal bull confirming his right to the throne and requiring obedience from his subjects on pain of excommunication. A new pope sent another papal bull in 1492 (Crawford 1967, p. lxxvii). These bulls were translated into English, circulated to parish churches, and were to be read by (or to) all. The second Tudor monarch, Henry VIII (1509–47), went even further in obtaining papal legitimation and published a treatise (1521) rejecting Luther's challenge (1517) to papal authority. The treatise was sufficiently influential to elicit Luther's

response. In return, the pope bestowed on Henry VIII the hereditary title of “Defender of the Faith.” Henry VIII was the first (and only) English monarch to receive this title from the pope.

The Tudors rewarded their Catholic legitimating agents by giving them the opportunity to influence policy. High clergy held policy-influential public offices during the first (pre-Reformation) 45 years of the Tudor dynasty (1485–1529). Specifically, high clergy held the most important offices of Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Privy Seal throughout this period. In total, high clergy held 100 percent (90 out of 90) of the office-years for these offices during this period.¹² Moreover, the high clergy held all the office-years under the Catholic Queen Mary I (1553–58).¹³

The pope also benefited when clergy held high public posts. Consider, for example, Thomas Wolsey (b. 1473–1530), who held important clerical offices but was also the Lord Chancellor. He initially advanced in the ranks of the church but in 1507 he entered the service of King Henry VII. Upon Henry VII’s death in 1509, Wolsey gained a seat in Henry VIII’s Privy Council, and in 1515 he became the Lord Chancellor. Prior to his fall from power in 1530, he also rose in the ranks of the Church, becoming the Bishop of London, the Archbishop of York, a cardinal, and the papal legate in England. Although Wolsey was a dedicated and capable chancellor who recognized his dependence on Henry VIII’s patronage, he “adapted his country’s foreign policy to the needs of the pope” (Elton 1991, p. 114).

Protestant high clergy had no comparative advantage in intermediating between the papacy and the crown. This is not to say that the post-Reformation English monarchs ceased using religion or the Church of England to legitimize their rule. Elizabeth I, for instance, frequently employed religious symbolism. Yet, the Church of England was dependent upon the monarch, since the latter was the formal leader of the Church. Our framework indicates that this should have made Church authorities weaker legitimating agents, though their capacity to delegitimize should have been greater.

Were the Protestant Tudor monarchs therefore less likely to nominate Protestant high clergy to policy-influential posts? The evidence confirms that this was the case. After the Reformation, from 1530 to 1603 (when the Tudor dynasty ended and excluding the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary I), the high clergy held the office of Lord Chancellor (a senior position in the Privy Council) only twice, that is, 3 percent of the total. No high clergy held the office of the Keeper of the Privy Seal (one of the highest offices in England). In total, out of the 138 office-years, high clergy held office only in 2 years (1.45 percent).

¹² Data from Powell and Cook (1977, p. 20). Years are not adjusted for months served.

¹³ Only the identities of her Chancellors are known.

The reason that Henry VIII broke with Rome also reveals the legitimating role of the papacy in pre-Reformation England. Notwithstanding the role of religiosity and greed in the drama of the Reformation, if the pope were a legitimating agent, the crown and papacy might have failed to reach a policy compromise. Was this the case? Did the pope and Henry VIII fail to reach a policy compromise that Henry was willing to accept, and the pope was willing to legitimate? The evidence supports this interpretation.¹⁴

Specifically, Henry VIII and the pope failed to reach a compromise regarding the annulment of the marriage of Henry and Catherine of Aragon. By 1527, Henry had already concluded that their marriage would not produce a male heir. Accordingly, he sought an annulment. The case for annulment had merit, and Cardinal Wolsey, Henry's Chancellor and the papal legate, was expected to quickly resolve the matter. By 1529, however, neither a viable compromise nor a process leading to it was in sight. In fact, the pope seemed to have been playing for time, perhaps because Charles I, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, objected to the annulment. Henry VIII responded by dismissing Cardinal Wolsey and accusing him of treason for placing the authority of the pope above that of the crown (*praemunire*).¹⁵ From 1529 to 1536, Henry VIII achieved the annulment, reformed the Church in England, and became its supreme head (to the exclusion of the pope).

From Rome to Westminster: Promoting Parliamentary (Legal) Legitimation

Prior to 1529, papal legitimacy was effective because most of the English population was Catholic. It is therefore puzzling that "the break with Rome was achieved with a minimum of opposition" (Lehmberg 1977, p. 279).¹⁶ If the pope was important in legitimating policies, how did Henry VIII and the other Protestant Tudors motivate compliance with policies to which the pope objected? The Tudors, after all, had low personal legitimacy and faced numerous policy challenges, including twice breaking with Rome (under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I), restoring Catholicism (under Mary I), crowning England's first female monarchs, marrying a reigning queen (Mary I) to a Spanish prince, and a long war due to the refusal of another queen (Elizabeth I) to do so.

¹⁴ See, for example, Russell (1971, ch. 2) and Turvey (2015, ch. 4).

¹⁵ Wolsey died in 1530 on his way to stand trial. Henry also dismissed the Bishop of London from his office as the Keeper of the Privy Seal.

¹⁶ That opposition was marginal is the dominant view among historians. For more, see Elton (1991, p. 115).

Although compliance can sometimes be coercively induced, this was not the case under the Tudors. As G. R. Elton noted with respect to Henry VIII, the most legitimate and powerful Tudor ruler, “despotic action” to counter popular resistance “would have been beyond Henry’s means” (Elton 1991, p. 115). This is not to say that the Tudors failed to use brute force and monetary incentives, when needed, to get their way. Yet, they refrained from policies leading to popular resistance, and they adjusted policies to accommodate such resistance when it arose. The reaction to Henry’s installation of the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries is a case in point. There was some resistance, the most dangerous of which was the Pilgrimage of Grace, a popular revolt that spread in the north of England in response to the Reformation. Henry defused the revolt by misleading its leaders into believing that he respected their concerns. Once the revolt ended, Henry executed the leaders. However, Henry did not subsequently rule despotically with respect to religious issues. Recognizing the threat to the Tudor regime, Henry’s religious policies were thereafter more accommodating to the Catholic tradition (Turvey 2015, pp. 106–07).

To strengthen their legitimacy and withstand papal delegitimation, the post-Reformation Tudors relied on Parliament to legitimize their policies. They therefore labored to strengthen Parliament’s legitimating power. The post-Reformation Tudors relied on legitimation provided by acts of Parliament (the statutory component of common law), which combined the legitimacy principle of hereditary monarchy with those of representation, consent, and rule of law.

Breaking with Rome entailed advancing an alternative legitimacy principle to papal legitimacy. Beginning in the 1530s, Henry VIII fostered the legitimating power of Parliament by regularly and publicly declaring that acts were issued by the authority of Parliament and not by his authority. An act was now declared, in Henry’s words, “by the King’s most excellent majesty, with the advice and assent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons, in the present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same” (Elton 1974b, p. 30). This formula explicitly recognized that a law was enacted by the crown in Parliament, requiring the consent of the Commons, Lords, and the crown.¹⁷ Subsequent Tudors continued doing so, and this enactment formula has become standard ever since.

¹⁷ This formula was used previously, particularly after the 1450s, but not constantly. An act was considered enacted by the crown after consulting with Parliament if the clause “by the authority of the same Parliament” was omitted. The act, in this case, was enacted by the crown and Parliament. North and Weingast (1988, p. 816) noted the importance of the “king-in-parliament” but argued it was used only after 1688: “[f]irst and foremost, the Revolution [of 1688] initiated the era of parliamentary ‘supremacy.’ This settled for the near future the issue of sovereignty: it was now the ‘king in Parliament,’ not the king alone.”

In other words, the Tudors increased the legitimating power of Parliament by publicly changing the legislation process from one in which the crown legislated in consultation with the Lords and the Commons (crown and Parliament) to one in which Parliament legislated by the consent of the Lords and Commons, with the assent of the crown (crown in Parliament).

Henry VIII further reinforced Parliamentary (legal) legitimacy in various ways. This included explicitly recognizing the legal immunity of Members of Parliament (MPs). To illustrate, consider the Ferrers case of 1543, which involved an MP (George Ferrers) who was arrested for a default on a loan to which he stood surety. When Parliament's Serjeant-at-Arms sought his release based on the immunity of members of Parliament, the arresting officers refused. The dispute escalated, and eventually the king ordered the release of Ferrers and noted the unity of Parliament and the crown. In Henry VIII's words, the crown "at no time stand[s] so highly in our estate royal as in the time of Parliament, wherein we as head and you as members are conjoined and knit together into one body politic, so as whatsoever offence or injury (during that time) is offered to the meanest member of the House is to be judged as done against our person and the whole Court of Parliament. Which prerogative of the court is so great (as our learned counsel informeth us) as all acts and processes coming out of any other inferior courts must for the time cease and give place to the highest..." (Elton 1982, p. 277).¹⁸ In other words, Henry VIII publicly recognized the ultimate legitimating powers of the crown in Parliament.

Henry VIII also fostered Parliament's legitimating power as a legislative body by transforming his conflict with the papacy from one over *religious* authority to one over *legal* authority. Henry advanced Parliamentary supremacy over the Convocation, the legislative assemblies of the clergy. The histories of Parliament and the Convocation date to the thirteenth century, when both were summoned by the crown to grant taxation. While Parliament represented secular subjects, the Convocation represented the people of the Church.¹⁹ By the Tudor period, both assemblies deliberated on and made laws; Parliament issued acts, and the Convocation issued canons. Acts were the statutory component of common law and thus adjudicated in common law courts, of which the highest court was the High Court of Parliament. Canons were the statutory component of canon law, whose highest procedural authority was the papal court in Rome.

¹⁸ Also see Russell (1971, p. 43).

¹⁹ Membership in the Convocation and Parliament overlapped. Wealthy members of the Church sat in the House of Lords.

Common and canon laws were supposed to have distinct spheres of adjudication. Common law was applicable to civil and criminal matters for secular Englishmen, while canon law was applicable to spiritual matters. In practice, however, the laws overlapped substantially, as members of the English clergy lived under canon law and every English person was subject to canon law in spiritual matters (the definition of which was open to arbitrary definition by canon law).

The Convocation, canon law, and church courts were visible manifestations of the legitimacy of the papal claim to supreme authority. One of the first steps taken by Henry VIII in breaking with Rome was encouraging Parliament to present him with the Supplication against the Ordinaries (1532), which listed complaints about corruption in the Church and abuses by the Church courts. Henry exploited (or assisted in inventing) animosity between the Church and the gentry who dominated Parliament (Fritze 1991, p. 366). Ironically, the crown's reliance on papal legitimacy had previously motivated English monarchs to allow such abuses.²⁰ Henry VIII sent the Supplication to the Convocation, requesting a response. Shortly afterward, prior to the Convocation responding, he invoked the 140-year-old Statute of Praemunire of 1392 (16 Richard 2 c 5) to accuse the clergy, as individuals and as a group, of praemunire (placing the authority of the pope above that of the crown). The Convocation agreed to pay a very large fine, submit to the crown's authority (with some ambiguous qualifications), and place canon law under the supervision of common law. In the following year (1533), Parliament issued the Ecclesiastical Appeals Act (24 Hen 8 c 12), prohibiting legal appeals to any court outside England, including Rome.

Although Convocations continued to meet and legislate, acts of Parliament limited their legislative authority. Similarly, the Church courts survived the break with Rome, but "the Reformation radically altered the position of the Church courts" (Fritze 1991, p. 106) and placed them under the authority of common law (e.g., the Act for the Submission of the Clergy, 1534). Once the Church courts were subdued, their authority was extended by acts of Parliament and under the supervision of the crown (Fritze 1991, p. 106).

The conjecture that the Reformation was a turning point in relying on Parliamentary legitimation implies that starting in 1529, Parliamentary activities would increase in number and scope. The evidence confirms this prediction. Table 3 presents the number of Acts of Parliament per year during Henry VIII's reign. It shows that there was a sudden, significant, and persistent increase in the activities of Parliament after 1529. The

²⁰ See Elton (1991) and Russell (1971). Turvey (2015) surveys the literature.

TABLE 3
ACTS OF PARLIAMENT UNDER HENRY VIII, 1509–1546

Year	Pre-Reformation		Post-Reformation		
	Total Acts	Public Acts	Year	Total Acts	Public Acts
1509	20	15	1529	26	21
1510	0	0	1530	23	16
1511	23	15	1531	34	20
1512	20	8	1532	16	13
1513	19	8	1533	34	22
1514	26	18	1534	26	18
1515	11	6	1535	63	28
1516–22	0	0	1536	52	18
1523	35	14	1537–38	0	0
1524–28	0	0	1539	28	14
			1540	80	50
			1541	46	39
			1542	48	28
			1543	25	18
			1544	0	0
			1545	32	25
			1546	1	0
Acts/Year	7.58	4.14		30.51	18.86
Acts/Days in Session	0.412	0.225		0.608	0.375
Share of Days in Session		0.050			0.138

Sources: Pickering (1767); *History of Parliament online*, various surveys of Parliaments.

left half presents the data for the pre-Reformation years (1509–28) and the right half for the post-Reformation years (1529–46).²¹ Calculating the yearly average of the number of acts indicates a substantial increase in the latter period. Between 1509, when Henry VIII came to power, and 1529, when he began the break with Rome, the yearly average of Parliamentary acts was 7.58, while the yearly average from 1529 onward was 30.51, a fourfold increase. The same was true of public acts, which increased from 4.14 to 18.86 per year. These are reflective of how much Henry used Parliament, not merely for royal private acts.²² Parliament was also in session much more after the Reformation. Prior to the Reformation, it was in session for 5.0 percent of days. This share nearly tripled to 13.8 percent after the Reformation. Moreover, the number of days it took a sitting Parliament to issue an act declined. The pre-Reformation Parliaments only enacted about four acts every ten days in session, while the post-Reformation Parliaments enacted about six acts every ten days in session. A similar increase in Parliamentary activity occurred with

²¹ The year 1547 is excluded because Henry VIII died on 28 January 1547.

²² Private acts regulate the affairs of specific locations, individuals, or corporations, whereas public acts regulate the affairs of England.

TABLE 4
ACTS OF PARLIAMENT AND CROWN PROCLAMATIONS, HENRY IV–JAMES II

Monarch	Reign	House	Acts per Year	Public Acts per Year	Proclamations per Year	Proclamations to Public Acts Ratio	Public Acts per Day in Session
Henry IV	1399–1413	Lancaster	10.46				
Henry V	1413–1422	Lancaster	6.56				
Henry VI	1422–1461	Lancaster	5.19				
Edward IV	1461–1483	York	2.45		0.95		
Richard III	1483–1485	York	15.29	6.90	7.87	1.13	
Henry VII	1485–1509	Tudor	13.01	4.81	2.83	0.59	
Henry VIII	1509–1528	Tudor	7.58	4.14	3.69	0.89	
Henry VIII	1529–1547	Tudor	30.51	18.86	10.46	0.55	0.38
Edward VI	1547–1553	Tudor	22.44	15.86	15.32	0.97	0.63
Mary I	1553–1558	Tudor	12.75	12.19	13.50	1.11	0.21
Elizabeth I	1558–1603	Tudor	9.85	6.58	9.42	1.43	0.33
James I	1603–1625	Stuart	13.71	6.09	12.13	1.90	0.10
Charles I	1625–1639	Stuart	1.66	0.45	18.82	41.82	0.02
Charles II	1660–1685	Stuart	19.77	7.51	15.98	2.13	0.06
James II	1685–1688	Stuart	7.71	5.66	37.02	6.54	0.12

Notes: Reign of Henry VIII split into pre-Reformation (1509–28) and post Reformation (1529–47). Charles I data up to Long Parliament of 1640, as acts of Parliament were not recognized as such by the crown after the onset of conflict. For most sessions the dates of assembly are known, but in rare cases we must use the designated dates for the assembly.

Sources: Pickering (1767); Crawford (1967); Steele (1910); Heinze (1976); Youngs (1976); *History of Parliament online*, various surveys of Parliaments.

respect to public acts (an increase from 2.25 to 3.75 public acts for every ten days in session).

The higher level of Parliamentary activity persisted during the reigns of the other Tudor monarchs, suggesting an increased reliance on Parliamentary legitimation. Table 4 presents the number of acts and acts per year for every monarch from 1399 to 1688 (i.e., from Henry IV to James II). The number of acts (both public and total) per year under Henry VIII after the Reformation was higher than any previous monarch, and it remained high under Edward VI and Mary I. Although it declined somewhat under Elizabeth I, it was still higher than for most of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Table 4 also presents the ratio of proclamations (royal executive orders) to public acts as a proxy for the relative increase in the use of acts over time. If legitimation were immaterial, the crown would have preferred to rely only on proclamations that the monarch could issue without Parliament. The table shows that this was not the case. The ratio of proclamations to public acts dropped to its lowest level of 0.55 during the post-Reformation reign of Henry VIII, implying a greater reliance on acts than proclamations. This ratio remained low under the other Tudors, although it increased under Elizabeth I. Elizabeth had her share of conflicts with Parliament, particularly in her later years when

her legitimacy was more secure (having ruled for several decades and having removed the primary contestant to the throne, Mary, Queen of Scots), although England was at war with Spain and she was in need of financing. Creating monopolies was part of her response. Despite these tensions, her relations with Parliament were primarily those of cooperation, especially relative to what it would become under the Stuarts.

Another indication that acts were used to legitimize policies is the large expansion of acts concerning issues that were beyond Parliament's traditional purview. The use of acts in policy areas new to Parliament suggests the expansion of its legitimacy domain. Henry VIII, for example, sought acts to legitimize each step in the break with Rome. The issues involved were ones Parliament never dealt with before, including religion, marriage, divorce, and royal succession.

The high legitimation value of acts of Parliament is clear from the high demand for private bills regulating the affairs of specific locations, individuals, and corporations. As Elton (1974a, p. 195) noted, "in the course of the sixteenth century Parliament came to be a very important instrument in the management of the political nation's private affairs ... people wanted Parliaments not only to make laws for church and commonwealth, not only to serve the economic and social needs of particular areas or sectional interests, but also as the major—the most conclusive—means for settling the legal problems." In fact, the total number of acts under the Tudors was around 1,800, about 68 percent of which were private (Pickering 1767).²³ The large number of private acts is remarkable given the substantial number of public acts dealing with the major reforms of the period.

For agents to successfully legitimate a political authority, they must have some degree of independence. Was this the case for the Tudor Parliaments? On the one hand, Parliament met at the discretion of the crown, who summoned and dismissed it at will (although the crown could not determine its composition). The crown influenced the legislative agenda and could decline assenting to any bill. Yet, the crown was unable to manipulate the elections of MPs to any significant extent, force MPs to accept demands, or wholesale buy their obedience. Elton (1982, pp. 307–08) noted that "Parliament was so little packed, subservient or submissive that it could never be relied upon with real certainty to support the policy of the Crown." Other notable historians of the period concurred (Lehmberg 1977, p. 275; Schofield 2004, p. 16). Because Parliament was not subservient to the crown, it could legitimize the crown.

²³ The most common type of private bill concerned estates (Bogart and Richardson 2011).

Legitimacy-Based Cooperation or Balance-of-Power Conflict?

That MPs benefited from their service, although unpaid by the crown, is well known. One way they benefited was by advancing private bills for which the promoting MP was financially and legally compensated by the individual or corporation seeking the bill.²⁴ There were also social benefits to joining Parliament. MPs were highly esteemed among their peers and members of their community. Such social connections made in the halls of Parliament could lead to financial gain, as interactions with the most powerful men in England opened the door to lucrative possibilities such as a seat in the House of Lords (Wasson 2000, p. 31).

Evaluating whether the Tudors and Parliament shared the gains from legitimation is challenging because Parliament can rarely be considered a unitary actor. It was too large, diverse, and eclectic for its members to have identical preferences on most issues. One issue unifying Parliament arose during the restoration of Catholicism under Mary I, and it reveals how the crown and Parliament used the legitimating power of acts of Parliament to their mutual benefit. The desire of Mary I to return to Catholicism raised the issue of property rights in land that had belonged to Catholic monasteries prior to the Reformation and had been confiscated by Henry VIII during the Reformation. Much of this land was subsequently acquired by the county gentry that dominated Parliament. They stood to lose this land if restoring Catholicism meant restoring that land to the Church. The policy compromise was to enact the restoration of Catholicism—as Mary wanted—but also to issue an act securing the property rights of the new owners—as Parliament wanted. The First and Second Statutes of Repeal (1553 and 1555) abolished religious legislation that had been enacted under Edward VI and Henry VIII (after 1529) under the stipulations that the monarch was still the supreme head of the Church of England and that all monastic land acquired after the dissolution of the monasteries remained with its current owners. The mere use of acts to declare this compromise is informative. Parliament correctly recognized that the crown would not infringe upon an act, while Mary recognized that the legitimating power of an act would facilitate the religious change she sought.

The observation that Parliament was an arena for setting policies and benefiting MPs, however, is also consistent with other equilibrium theories of Parliament. The evidence, however, confirms the legitimacy view. The view centered on coercive (military) power and the constitutional reforms that followed in the wake of Parliament's military

²⁴ Private bills were first delineated as such in the Parliament of 1539, although private bills were advanced previously (Cruise 1835, p. 2).

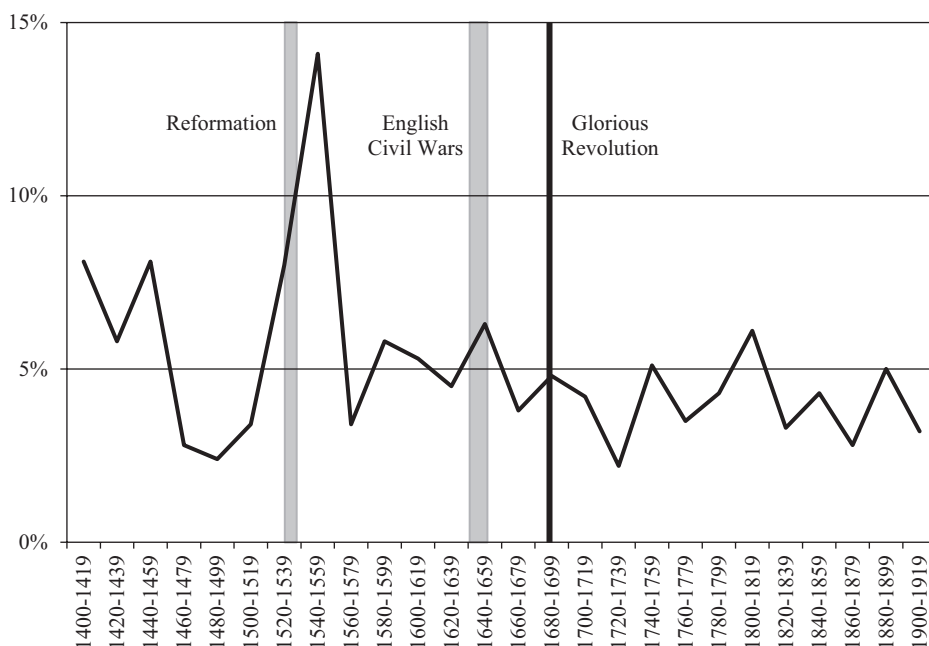


FIGURE 1
NEW ENTRANTS (FAMILIES) INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1400–1919

Source: Wasson (2000, table 3.12).

victories (North and Weingast 1989; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Cox 2012) would predict that new membership in Parliament should change following military conflicts, revealing new (military) power holders. In the case under consideration, this view would predict that new entrants in Parliament would emerge in greater numbers following the Civil Wars and Glorious Revolution. The legitimacy conjecture, in contrast, implies that new entry into Parliament would rise following the Reformation. The increasing reward associated with Parliament’s higher legitimating power would attract new MPs.

The evidence confirms the prediction of the legitimacy conjecture. Figure 1 reveals that the proportion of new entrants into the House of Commons reached a peak in the years during and following the Reformation. In sharp contrast, this fraction declined following the Civil Wars and Glorious Revolution. The evidence contradicts the assertion that these military conflicts opened Parliament to those who were previously excluded.

Parliament—particularly the Commons—was initially weak, and the Tudors labored to extend its reach. Election of individual members was the responsibility of the locality and beyond the reach of the crown. However, the crown could authorize the permanent acceptance of a town

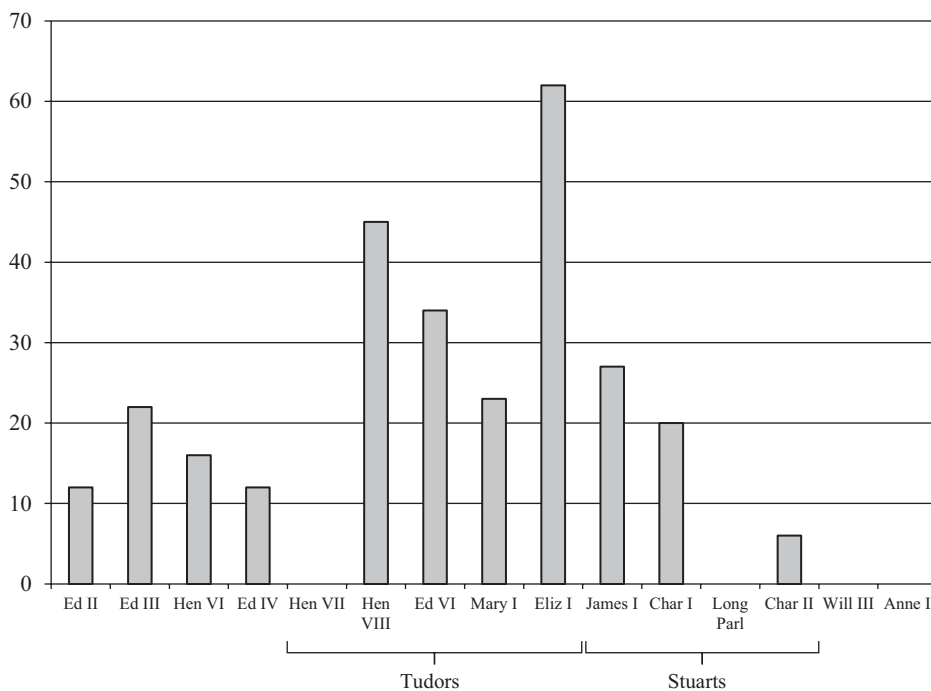


FIGURE 2
TOTAL BOROUGH MPS ADDED BY MONARCH, 1284–1707

Sources: Powell and Cook (1977), Cook and Wroughton (1980), and Cook and Stevenson (1988).

by the House of Commons. In the early Tudor period, representation was spotty; towns from only two counties (Cornwall and Wiltshire) were well represented, having 37 enfranchised boroughs between them. Most of the other 40 English counties were only thinly represented. The county of Durham was not represented at all, as it was an ancient palatine county under the jurisdiction of its bishop (Thrush and Ferris 2012).

The Tudors increased the number of MPs much more than previous or later monarchs and expanded their geographical distribution to cover, for the first time, all of England and Wales (see Figure 2).²⁵ This expansion was important because Acts of Parliament were valid only in areas represented in Parliament. These new MPs were not subservient to the crown, and the new localities they represented retained their independence in choosing their MPs.

Historians of the Tudor period have emphasized that the crown and Parliament cooperated in governing England. The prominent historian of the dynasty, Conrad Russell (1971, p. 44), noted that “Tudor England

²⁵ The Tudor monarchs retained the right to invite a county or a city to send representatives to Parliament.

was a one-party state.” As he explains, this means that the crown and Parliament were different components of the same machinery of the state. As such, they had to work with each other, and they were successful in doing so. From the perspective developed earlier, they were successful because legitimacy-based cooperation was beneficial to both sides.

Crown-Parliament cooperation was not always smooth, and MPs—as individuals and factions—objected to various policies advocated by the crown. But such disagreements were political, not structural. The crown and Parliament cooperated in confronting common internal and external adversaries and used acts of Parliament in doing so. A prominent example, mentioned previously, is their cooperation in confronting the Catholic Church and confiscating its wealth. Although the crown directly benefited from the wealth transfer, the gentry class that dominated Parliament benefited indirectly in two ways: lower taxation to finance Henry VIII’s wars and the acquisition of much of the confiscated land at fire-sale prices.

In cooperating on other matters, such as taxation, Parliament often obtained from the grateful crown concessions. Such reciprocity was taken for granted, as suggested by the observation that under the Tudors, Parliament did not condition acts granting taxation on reciprocity by the crown. Moreover, Parliaments did not delay voting on taxation until their last session (i.e., after the crown addressed their concerns). Stanford E. Lehmberg (1977, p. 275), the prominent historian of the Parliaments of Henry VIII, concluded that although “the burden of taxation laid on subjects by the later Parliaments [of Henry VIII] was unprecedented ... the King used no threats or force save persuasion to obtain money. Parliament never insisted on redress of grievances before voting supply, nor did the King dissolve Parliament as soon as tax bills were passed in order to prevent enactment of unpalatable legislation.”

Moreover, it is possible to evaluate crown-Parliament cooperation during the Tudor and Stuart periods directly by measuring the number of days it took a sitting Parliament to agree on a public act. Recall that Parliament met at the discretion of the crown, who had the action-based legitimacy to call Parliament, have it seated, and dismiss it. Thus, Parliament sat only when the crown wanted to cooperate with Parliament. Such cooperation manifested itself in acts of Parliament, implying that the time it took a sitting Parliament to issue an act measures crown-Parliament cooperation.

Table 4 presents the data. The last column presents the number of public acts issued per day a Parliament sat for each monarch between the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution. It reveals that the Tudors cooperated with their Parliaments. For every 10 days Parliament was in session under the Tudors, they passed between 2.1 acts under Mary 1 and

6.3 acts under Edward VI. In comparison, under the Stuarts, they passed between 0.2 acts under Charles I (one act every 50 days in session) and 1.2 acts under James II. The Tudors cooperated with their Parliaments; the Stuarts did so much less.

Legitimacy and the Structure of Parliament

The transition to Parliamentary (legal) legitimacy had important implications for many aspects of England's polity and economy. This subsection illustrates this point—and contributes further evidence supporting our conjecture—by considering the impact of the distribution of political power in England.

One important question is why the decline in the number of Spiritual Lords in the House of Lords was *permanent*. Prior to the Reformation, the Spiritual Lords regularly held more seats than the Temporal Lords and thus had veto power over any act of Parliament.²⁶ The Reformation, however, marked the end of the Spiritual Lords' majority in the House of Lords. Figure 3 presents the composition of the Lords at various points in time and illustrates that the Spiritual Lords held the majority of the seats in the model Parliaments of the thirteenth century and the first Tudor Parliament after the Wars of the Roses in 1485. The Spiritual Lords were still almost at par with the Temporal Lords in the Reformation Parliament; they held 50 out of 107 seats (Lehmberg 1970, p. 37). But the Spiritual Lords never held the majority again. During the seventeenth century, their share was always lower than 35 percent and averaged around 20 percent.

This change is puzzling. Temporary factors reduced the relative share of the Spiritual Lords in the Reformation Parliament.²⁷ But why was the decline *permanent*? Why did the Protestant Tudor and Stuart monarchs not pack the House of Lords with Protestant clergy? After all, the crown had the prerogative to invite whomever it wished to the House of Lords, while as the head of the Anglican Church, the crown had discretion regarding who to nominate as high clergy.

The reason is transparent if, as argued here, Parliament was a legitimating agent. The post-Reformation Spiritual Lords were dependent on the crown and thus had lower legitimating power and higher delegitimizing power than their pre-Reformation counterparts. The pre-Reformation clergy had greater legitimating power because the papacy provided them with an outside option in case they faced the crown's ire

²⁶ Spiritual Lords were comprised of bishops, archbishops, abbots, and (prior to the Reformation) representatives of wealthy monasteries, whereas Temporal Lords were secular nobility.

²⁷ Some pre-Reformation clergy were invited to the House of Lords due to their role as heads of wealthy Catholic organizations. See Pike (1894, p. 156) and Graves (1985, p. 89).

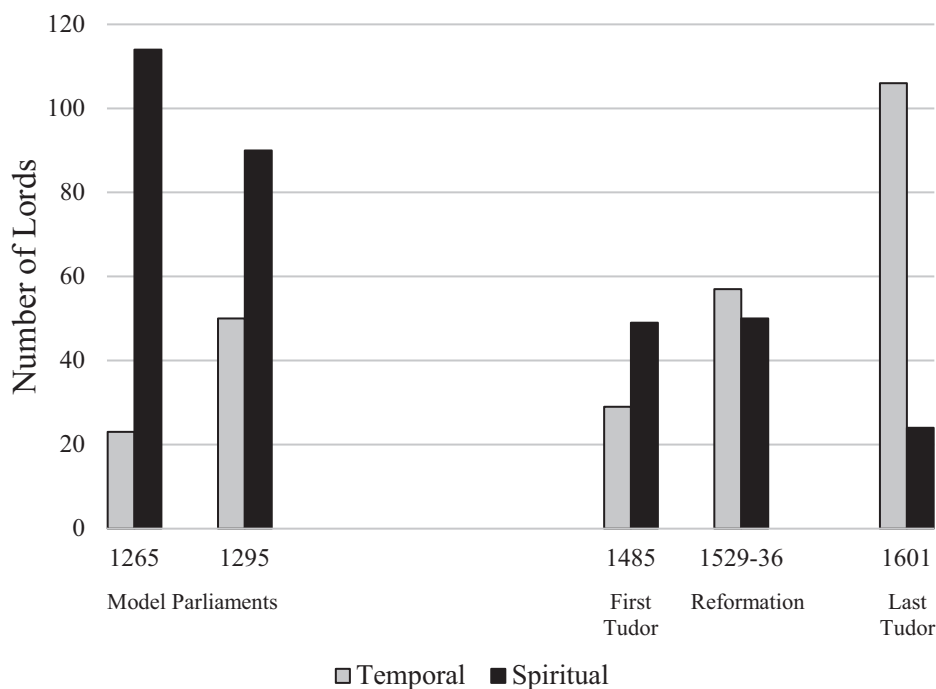


FIGURE 3
COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS, 1265–1601

Sources: Pike (1894), Lehmborg (1970), Cook and Wroughton (1980), and Cook and Stevenson (1988).

after they declined legitimating his policies. The opposite holds, however, regarding delegitimation. The lower personal cost of delegitimizing rendered a refusal to legitimate less informative. This argument also implies, however, that the post-Reformation Protestant clergy had lower legitimation and higher delegitimation power than the pre-Reformation Catholic clergy. A refusal to legitimize was more personally costly to a post-Reformation Spiritual Lord, rendering such an action highly informative. The high cost is well reflected in the executions of the high clergy who refused to support Henry VIII, such as Fisher and More.

The transition away from legitimation by high clergy—Catholic or Protestant—is also revealed by the details of coronation ceremonies. Traditionally, during a coronation, two bishops escorted the monarch to the coronation throne. This was still the case in Henry VIII's (Catholic) coronation, but not in the ceremonies of subsequent Protestant Tudors. In the coronation ceremony of Edward VI—the first post-Reformation coronation—the role of religion was either reduced from previous ceremonies or altogether absent. Perhaps the most important difference was the

identity of Edward's escorts. Instead of the two customary bishops, he was escorted by a single bishop and a secular lord, the Earl of Shrewsbury (Strong 2005, pp. 199–200). In addition, the order of homage to the new king differed: Lord Somerset was the first to render homage, followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor, and then the lords and clergy collectively. These were important changes because they reflected a shift in the identity of the important legitimating agents. Strong (2005, pp. 199–200) notes that the general feel of the ceremony was vastly different than its predecessors: "What must have struck potently those present was the shift in emphasis away from the clergy in favour of the laity . . . When the young king was carried in a chair to the four sides of the scaffold, with Cranmer at his side, it was not for a ritual which could be regarded in any way as election, but for the recognition of Edward as the 'rightful and undoubted enheritour by the laws of God and man to the Royal Dignitie and Crowne Imperiall of this realme' . . . Edward was the first king to issue a proclamation declaring that he had come to the throne fully invested and established in the crown imperial of the realm."²⁸

WERE THE CONFLICTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY LEGITIMACY CONFLICTS?

Does the conjecture that legitimacy conflicts characterized the seventeenth century provide an alternative to the view centered on coercive power and transgressions of property rights? Evaluating this question is beyond the scope of this paper but a few comments are in order.

The claim advanced in this paper is that Parliamentary (legal) legitimation became an important legitimacy principle under the post-Reformation Tudors. This new legitimacy principle was part of the initial conditions that James I faced when he ascended to the throne in 1603. The Stuarts were more legitimate than the Tudors, as revealed in Table 2. But they inherited a Parliament with strong legitimating power. Following the same logic used to examine the Tudor period, the high-legitimacy Stuarts should have preferred a weaker Parliament. Moreover, James I was accustomed to the weaker Scottish Parliament and wrote and lectured extensively about his belief in the legitimacy principle of the Divine Right of Kings, according to which kings are the equivalent of God on earth and have absolute right over their subjects' lives and properties. His son (Charles I) and grandchildren (Charles II and James II) held similar views.

²⁸ For more, see Hunt (2008, p. 85).

The attempts by the Stuarts (particularly Charles I) to leverage their higher legitimacy and higher revenues, the latter mostly from the expansion of trade, led, as predicted by our theory, to a legitimacy conflict with Parliament. Although military fights were the most visible manifestations of this conflict, the conflict transpired in other ways as well. For example, Charles I tried to rule without Parliament during the period of “personal rule” from 1629 to 1640, during which he did not call Parliament. He called Parliament after he tried to raise taxation based on his prerogative rights, despite the fact that taxation was in Parliament’s legitimacy domain.

Military power played a role in the crown-Parliament conflicts, but it was secondary. Parliament needed a monarch to be legitimate itself, and it thus welcomed James I upon the death of Elizabeth, restored the monarchy in 1660, and crowned William and Mary in 1689. At the same time, effectively governing England required a legitimate Parliament (assembled by the crown and following the crown in Parliament procedure). Hence, Charles I failed to govern without Parliament on the eve of the Civil Wars, and Oliver Cromwell failed to create either a republic or a lasting protectorate. William and Mary had military superiority once James II escaped in 1688, but their legitimacy was lower than that of the previous Stuarts (see Table 2). Legitimacy considerations thus seem to account for several key historical facts that the view centered on coercive power either does not account for or does not consider altogether. The conflict between the Stuarts and their Parliaments was a legitimacy conflict; in the wake of the Tudor period, Parliament was too strong of a legitimating agent for the high legitimacy Stuarts.

To further demonstrate the ability of the legitimacy conflict view to better comprehend seventeenth-century events, consider the role of religion. It was an important feature of the seventeenth-century conflicts but largely ignored by social scientists—though certainly not by historians—of the period. Charles I imposed unpopular religious policies throughout his reign—all without the consent of Parliament (Zaller 2007, ch. 7). His attempts to impose unpopular uniform religious practices on Scottish churches played a central role in fomenting the Scottish and Irish rebellions (which required Charles to call Parliament and were the proximate cause of the Civil Wars) (Russell 1990, ch. 5). The Exclusion Crisis (1679–81) was the result of Protestants in Parliament (unsuccessfully) attempting to prevent the Catholic James from succeeding his brother, Charles II, to the throne. The crisis split Parliament along lines that would become the first parties (Tories and Whigs).

The literature that built on North and Weingast (1989) cannot account for these facts. North and Weingast (1989, p. 805) are aware of this fact:

“Since we focus on the evolution and impact of the political institutions, of necessity we slight the larger economic and religious context, even though in many specific instances these larger religious and economic issues were proximate sources of actions and policies that we describe. Indeed, no history of the seventeenth century is complete that does not describe both the growing markets and the evolving organizations that accompanied economic expansion as well as the persistent religious tensions, particularly between Catholic and Protestant.”

Another way to highlight the similarity and distinction between the legitimacy approach and that of North and Weingast (1989) is by focusing on credible commitment. The issue is: how can a ruler commit to respecting any agreement with her subjects? North and Weingast’s premise is that Parliament’s military power enabled such commitment. This view thus focuses on exogenous factors, such as the threats of foreign invasion, that rendered commitment difficult and shifted the balance of military power in favor of Parliament, as well as the military conflicts (between crown and Parliament) that made such a shift common knowledge. The legitimacy view emphasizes that legitimacy can also enable credible commitment, identifies the conditions incentivizing the crown to promote Parliament as its legitimating agent, and explains why a legitimacy conflict can undermine intra-elite cooperation. The threat of losing legitimacy can, in some circumstances, be sufficient to motivate political authorities to follow through on their promises. This was the case in sixteenth-century England, and recognizing this is necessary for comprehending political events in the seventeenth century.

These facts are all highly consistent with the legitimacy conflict view, suggesting that religious issues were more than mere propaganda. The high-legitimacy Stuart kings desired a new legitimacy principle that would allow them to rule without making major concessions to Parliament. The Divine Right of Kings ideology (which James I and Charles I exerted great effort to establish) and the supporting Episcopalian institutions (those associated with Arminianism or even Catholicism) were the most obvious alternatives to Parliamentary legitimacy. This legitimacy principle would have left no place in the ruling coalition for Parliament. This left no part of the bargaining space in which a mutually beneficial policy existed. A *legitimacy conflict* ensued.

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THE TUDOR PERIOD

This paper establishes that following Henry VIII’s break with Rome, the legitimacy-weak Tudor monarchs relied upon Parliamentary (legal)

legitimacy. The initial weakness of Parliament motivated them to foster Parliament's legitimating power. They achieved this in various ways, such as through public declarations, promoting Parliamentary immunity, extending representation throughout England, and expanding the range of issues that required Parliamentary legitimation. The legitimacy-weak Tudor monarchs gained more from the legitimation of policies by acts of Parliament than they lost from the compromise on policies necessary to have them legitimated by Parliament. The common interests of the crown, the Lords, and the Commons in confronting external powers such as France, Spain, Scotland, and the papacy facilitated cooperation, which in turn motivated the legitimacy-weak Tudors to increase the scale and scope of the Commons and to increase its legitimacy domains, thereby reinforcing the legitimating power of acts of Parliament. The resulting legitimacy principle combined and reinforced the legitimacy principles of hereditary monarchy, consent, representation, and communal autonomy.

By the end of the Tudor period, acts issued by the *crown in Parliament* replaced the crown and Parliament as the ultimate authorities of statutory law. As Frederick Maitland (1908, p. 298) concluded in his seminal work on the constitutional history of England, by the end of the Tudor dynasty, "there was nothing the Parliament could not do ... the king in parliament was absolutely supreme, above the king and above the law."

Legality—the consent of Parliament expressed as an Act—therefore constrained the crown's choice of action, and in this sense (some measure of) the rule of law prevailed in Tudor England. At the same time, the rule of law empowered the crown in various ways. One was the enhanced legitimacy of policies. The crown had legitimate authority over summoning, dismissing, and dissolving Parliament and the legitimate right to suspend and dispense of an enacted law. As noted by the Speaker of the House in Elizabeth I's 1601 parliament, the Queen was "the only life-giver unto our laws."²⁹ In addition, the crown had the legitimate right to nominate, compensate, and dismiss all public officials, military officers, judges, bishops, and clergy.

At the same time, the houses of Parliament, particularly the House of Commons, benefited from the rule of law because "one of the prime functions of Parliament, if not its principle purpose, was to legislate" and "most bills were initiated in the lower House" (*ibid.*). The rule of law increased the legitimating power of the Commons, and this enabled it to influence subsequent constitutional changes. As the prominent historian of the English Parliament, A.F. Pollard (1920, p. 160), noted, the

²⁹ Cited in the *History of Parliament online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/i-nature-functions-and-remit-house-commons>.

sixteenth century was “the great period of the consolidation of the House of Commons, and without that consolidation the house would have been incapable of the work it achieved in the seventeenth.”

None of this is to say that a completely impartial rule of law, which treats everyone the same, prevailed in Tudor England. The rule of law in England has always held the crown above the law. Just as today King Charles III cannot be prosecuted in any English criminal court, neither could any Tudor or Stuart monarch. The trial of Charles I for treason by the High Court of Justice (1649) is an exception that proves the rule. This court was established by the Rump Parliament, which included only a subset of the members of the Long Parliament of 1640. During his trial, Charles I asserted that no court had authority over him. Civil cases involving the crown and cases concerning agents of state were heard by the Court of the King’s Bench, a Common Law court. More generally, the rule of law under the Tudors differed from its more recent form in three important ways. First, judges served at the discretion of the monarch, who nominated and compensated them. English monarchs thus had leverage to impact the interpretation of the law and court decisions (Klerman and Mahoney 2005). Second, not every English subject enjoyed the same civil rights. One’s rights depended on gender, class, and religion. Third, the law still did not supersede the prerogative rights of the crown. In addition, the crown could legitimize policies by relying on its role as the head of the Anglican Church.

This study goes beyond a narrow focus on the role of coercive power, and the resources required to attain it, in the evolution of political systems. By incorporating the role of cultural beliefs related to legitimacy, our framework has the power to explain several relevant features of England’s transition that studies centered on coercive power cannot. This is important for the case of England’s political transition, as the cultural and institutional changes that occurred during the Tudor period had an important legacy for what would come next. While demonstrating that the seventeenth-century military conflicts were a reflection of a wider legitimacy conflict is best left for future work, this paper has demonstrated the possibility of opening the black box of endogenous political legitimacy. More generally, our framework should be applicable in a variety of historical and contemporary settings in which endogenous changes to legitimacy principles emerged. The present study reveals the importance of understanding the role that context-specific historical events played in the evolution of such political systems. However, our framework is flexible enough to focus the attention of future studies on the institutional and cultural attributes that drove change (or lack thereof) in such settings.

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