

Political valuation analysis and the legitimacy of international organizations¹

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Abstract

Research methods dealing with textual data enjoy increasing popularity in the field of political science research. Both the magnitude of quantitative and qualitative methods applied to the analysis of political texts and their scope of application are mounting in recent years. While this is especially the case with regard to the inquiry into political claims (claims analysis) and the reconstruction of interpretative frames (frames analysis), this paper focuses on a so far rather neglected aspect: Valuation analysis. We argue that political valuations and evaluations play a significant role in politics and propose a newly developed qualitative approach that addresses explicitly the particularities of political valuations in textual data. The basic structure of the method makes use of the general linguistic structure of valuation-statements and is, therefore, applicable to a broad range of research topics such as the study of the legitimacy of political regimes, political authorities – i.e. actors of the political process – and even policies. In general, the approach builds on the idea that evaluative statements – our basic unit of observation – are defined by three key variables: the valuation object that is assessed, the evaluative (positive/negative) thrust of the valuation, and the valuation pattern on which it is based. With the help these three variables the method is not only in the position to capture the assessment of objects in different communicative contexts in a very fine-grained manner, but it is also able to provide information on the nexus of valuation object and criteria and the development of these aspects over time. After presenting the theoretical argument and methodology the remainder of the contribution illustrates the applicability of valuation analysis. By presenting our findings on the empirical legitimacy of the United Nations in four national publics (Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States) we demonstrate how the genuinely qualitative character of the method allows for linguistic diversity and how its results can still be integrated into quantitative studies that may even make use of inferential statistics.

¹ The text stems from an ongoing research project directed by Frank Nullmeier (University of Bremen) funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). See also Hurrelmann et al. (2009); Schneider et al. (2010); Gronau et al. (2009); Nonhoff et al. (2009); Biegoń et al. (2010).

Zusammenfassung

In der Text-, Inhalts- und Diskursanalyse ist bisher nicht hinreichend der Tatsache Rechnung getragen worden, dass politische Prozesse in hohem Maße von Wertungen und Bewertungen getragen und begleitet sind. Während Forderungen (Claims Analysis) und Deutungsmuster (Frames Analysis) als Spezialfelder der qualitativen Textanalyse entwickelt worden sind, fehlt es bislang an einer entsprechenden Ausdifferenzierung einer politischen Bewertungsanalyse. Die Verfasser haben eine derartige Methodik der wertungsbezogenen Textanalyse entwickelt und diese für ein breites Spektrum von Fragestellungen nutzbar gemacht. Neben der empirischen Legitimationsforschung, die sich mit der Bewertung grundlegender politischer Ordnungsstrukturen beschäftigt, lassen sich so auch Untersuchungen für die Bewertung von Personen, Authorities, Policies, Policy-Instrumenten und Policy-Reformen mit Hilfe dieser Methode durchführen. In allen Fällen kann eine gemeinsame Methodik angewendet werden, die sich die grundlegende grammatische Struktur von Bewertungsäußerungen zunutze macht. Es geht jeweils darum, Objekte der Bewertung zu identifizieren und die Richtung der Bewertung und das konkrete Bewertungsmuster zu benennen. Nachdem im ersten Teil des Papiers das zentrale theoretische Argument für die Anwendung solcher Analysen sowie die Methode selbst vorgestellt werden, illustrieren die Autoren anschließend die empirische Anwendbarkeit der Methode. Hierzu werden die Ergebnisse zur Untersuchung der empirischen Legitimität der Vereinten Nationen in vier nationalen Öffentlichkeiten (Großbritannien, Deutschland, Schweiz und den Vereinigten Staaten) diskutiert.

1 Introduction

Research methods dealing with textual data (Krippendorff 2004; Roberts 2000) enjoy increasing popularity in the field of political science research. Both the magnitude of quantitative (see for instance King/Lowe 2003; Klingemann et al. 2006; Laver et al. 2003) and qualitative methods (see for instance Fairclough 2003; Keller et al. 2008; Wodak/Krzyzanowski 2008; Wodak 2009) applied to the analysis of political text and their scope of application have been mounting in recent years. While this is especially the case with regard to the inquiry into political claims (claims analysis, Gerhards et al. 2007; Koopmans/Statham 2010a) and the deconstruction of interpretative frames (frame analysis, Gerhards et al. 1998; Snow/Benford 1992), the pro-

posed contribution focuses on an aspect that has so far been rather neglected: That of political valuation analysis.

Political valuations play a significant role in politics. Wherever a state of societal affairs is subject of political debate we can witness valuing utterances. The issue at stake will be valued as ‘inacceptable’, ‘problematic’, ‘shocking’, ‘unsatisfactory’ or as a ‘big step towards a better society’. The situation is considered a result of ‘ongoing injustice’, ‘a further political victory of the pharmaceutical industry’, an outcome of ‘corruption’, or an expression of ‘pure campaign strategy’. Valuations are a very familiar part of our everyday and political language. They function as the first step in the formulation of political claims, proposals, and programs. A specific situation is only likely to be subjected to political regulation if it is evaluated as ‘problematic’. In light of such significance and universality of evaluative utterances in public life, political science has to be interested in a method which explicitly addresses political valuations in textual data. However, in the literature of political science methods, we find only very specific and restricted contributions to a systematic analysis of political valuations.

2 Why we do not have political valuation research

The philosopher Donald Davidson – who died in 2003 – included in his essay collection “Problems of Rationality” a lecture titled “Expressing Evaluations” (2004: 19-38). He picked the title to emphasize that evaluations do not constitute a speech act but are rather to be interpreted as an evaluative attitude. Although it is possible to express such attitudes linguistically, Davidson argued that the analysis of explicitly evaluative utterances does not yield meaningful insights into valuations and values. Until today, most empirical political science research is marked by this focus on attitudes and the concurrent contempt of evaluative language. Consequently, research on political regime support is predominantly characterized by survey-based public opinion research (most recently for Germany: Westle/Gabriel 2009). In this branch of research – developed and advanced by Almond and Verba

(1963) and David Easton's theoretical considerations (1965; 1975) – data on public opinion is generated in a reactive way. Citizens' assessments activated and gauged by means of surveys are declared to depict public opinion on political regimes, the current government, or some particular policy (Dalton 2004; Kaase/Newton 1995; Westle 2007). Accordingly, public opinion is based on what citizens have put on record in representative surveys. This approach is, however, not only prone to systematic bias resulting from particular framings of survey items and nuances in the linguistic context (Thaler/Sunstein 2008) but also to the more fundamental issue of whether survey-based research can capture all dimensions of public opinion. This topic surfaces because private valuations covered by survey research do not become public until they are aggregated by the research method itself. Only if poll ratings are published in the mass media they can become part of public debates on political regimes. The validity of this approach may be disputed because it is by no means clear whether private valuations filtered through a survey match what is implied by the concept of public opinion (Habermas 2008: 164-166).

Consequently, Jürgen Habermas argues that survey-based research cannot be considered to be sufficient. In order to produce a comprehensive picture of public opinion, published contributions have to be taken into account as well. He notes that quality newspapers constitute a particularly rich source of information (Habermas 2008: 170/1; Thompson 2000) because they function as a transmission belt and gatekeeper between the political system and its citizens (Gerhards et al. 2007; Hallin/Mancini 2004; Hardy 2008; Wessler et al. 2008). Although we can certainly think of additional arenas of published opinion such as television, online platforms, blogs, and tabloid newspapers (McChesney 2007), it has to be noted that their analysis, too, necessitates the application of text analytical methods to published textual data instead of survey-based research (Richardson 2007). Consequently, we aim to offer a method which acknowledges the existence and relevance of various arenas of published opinion and is well equipped to travel easily across different sources of text.

In addition to the depreciation of linguistic representations of valuations in comparison to attitudes, a second philosophically grounded issue presents a significant barrier to the analysis of communicative and linguistic aspects of political valuations: Philosophical-metaethical debates focus on the basic terms of ‘good’ and ‘just’ and subsume the vast array of potential valuation criteria under the label of ‘values’. This dominance of *values* over evaluative judgments implies that instead of referring to *valuations*, respective debates are still concerned with *values*. In this vein, ontological discussions on their particular existence in the world are still characterized by this premise. What is more, philosophical debates giving priority to evaluative judgments are either narrowed down to moral and ethical assessments – thereby excluding esthetical or instrumental considerations – (Scheffler 2010) or they aid and abet the positivization of ethics as the pure tenets explaining the human application of norms (see for instance Schlick 1984: 74). In the history of German social science, the appreciation of valuations as objects of empirical research was particularly limited due to the ‘*Werturteilsstreit*’ – a dispute which unfolded in the run-up to World War One (Albert 2010) – and the ‘*Positivismusstreit*’ of the 1960s (Ritsert 2010). Methodological questions of how to analyze valuations empirically were, consequently, suppressed by the debate on the legitimacy of theoretical evaluations.

Furthermore, following the Kantian tradition that characterized German philosophical thinking up to the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas, the term ‘value’ is clearly distinguished and normatively depreciated vis-à-vis the notion of ‘norms’. The aim to find a universally compelling normativity contributes to the preference for a consistent set of moral norms over the incoherent and plural world of values.

Hence, the philosophical context cannot be considered to foster the emergence of a strong branch of research that emphasizes the analysis of valuations as an everyday component of societal and political communication. This might explain why even the advancement of content, text, and discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003; Keller 2007; Keller et al. 2008; Richardson 2007; Titscher et al. 1998) did not spark stronger interest in valuations as a core

element of political text. The vast body of literature on interpretive policy analysis, ideational approaches to political science and qualitative research designs (see for instance: Blatter et al. 2007; Blyth 2002; Deitelhoff 2006; Gofas/Hay 2010; Hajer 2008; Hay 2002; Nonhoff 2006; Nullmeier et al. 2011; Stone 2002) focuses on ideas, concepts, narratives, story lines, frames, hegemonies and discourse coalitions – but not on valuations.

On the one hand, research following the ideas of Stephen E. Toulmin (2003) seized on approaches of new rhetoric and argumentation theory (see also Eemeren/Grootendorst 2004; Kopperschmidt 1989) and turned to the analysis of political argumentations (Kuhlmann 1999) or initiated an ‘argumentative turn’ in policy analysis (Fischer/Forester 1993). With reference to theories of deliberative democracy, for instance, these approaches aimed at gauging the deliberative quality of political debates (Steiner et al. 2004). On the other hand, we witnessed mounting interest in the long-term historical examinations of world views and figures of speech. A case in point is, for instance, provided by Luc Boltanski’s and Laurent Thévenot’s work “On Justification: Economies of Worth” (2006). More linguistically oriented studies of political language focused in a similar vein on catchwords, text genres and language cultures, especially of rightwing movements or totalitarian regimes (Wodak/Krzyzanowski 2008; Wodak 2009). While in most interpretative and ideational approaches to policy analysis that look for discursive formations we find traces pointing in the direction of political valuations, they are not taken into account systematically. A particular focus on components of political debates as we offer it with our approach of political valuation analysis is until today only provided by the political claims analysis methodology (Haunss 2007; Koopmans/Statham 2010b; Koopmans/Statham 1999).

However, neither political claims analysis nor argumentation analysis can adequately account for political valuations, as they focus on very different aspects of political communication. Argumentation analysis aims at capturing how inferences are drawn from data, observations or empirical conditions. Building on the work of Toulmin (2003), this approach utilizes the terminology of ‘warrant’ for an argument and ‘qualifier’ and ‘rebuttal’ for re-

stricting conditions to gauge the validity and viability of particular arguments. The research objective of this method is rather to determine the persuasive power of explanatory-descriptive or normative arguments, and not such much on the evaluative character of political communication.

Political claims analysis refers to argumentations only in a rudimentary way. The last of seven elements constituting the generic grammar of claims-making is concerned with justifications (7). Political claims are specified by the dimensions of time and space (1), the claimant (2), the particular form of the claim (3), the addressee of the claim (4), the substantive issue in question (5), and the object of the claim (6). Due to this specific configuration, political claims analysis is tailored towards the identification of political demands and proposals. This approach is, therefore, limited to the analysis of prescriptive statements. We argue, however, that political actors – before bringing forward political demands or proposals – will assess a given political institution or situation. While a specific method dealing with the analysis of this aspect of political communication is still missing, the approach presented in this paper – political valuation analysis – helps to understand the positive or negative evaluations of political objects as ‘unsatisfactory’, ‘problematic, or ‘suitable’. With this approach we fill a methodological gap which neither argumentation analysis nor political claims analysis can help to fill.

In addition to this substantial difference, our method can be furthermore distanced from political claims analysis in terms of the major aim of inquiry. Contrary to political claims analysis – whose object of study is the political mobilization and protest that is produced by actors’ strategic contributions to public debates in the media – political valuation analysis focuses exclusively on the communicative dimension of public opinion. Hence, it is interested in a different component of public political text. While the political-claims approach aims to analyze “purposeful communicative action in the public sphere” (Koopmans/Statham 2010b: 55), we concentrate on published opinion, irrespective of the particular intention of such utterances. Political valuation analysis does not exclude published opinion which lacks this feature of purposeful action. The difference

between both methods is also marked by the focus of claims analysis on verbs to identify a mode or action type of claim-making. Political valuation analysis on the other hand is not interested in political action and modes of claim-making, but in all kinds of statements or speech acts which include evaluative judgments.

3 Valuing

The basic form of political valuation analysis originates from empirical legitimacy research that is concerned with the evaluation of political structures, institutions, and regimes. Starting from the premise of challenged legitimacy of the nation state due to economic globalization and the gradual privatization and internationalization of political arrangements, our research aimed at exploring the communicative (re-)production of legitimacy in western democratic nation states. By analyzing quality newspapers we traced the valuation of national political regimes, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Group of Eight (G8), and the supranational regime of the European Union (EU). In particular, this research was directed at gauging the valuation of the basic institutional structures of these political regimes (Nullmeier et al. 2010; Schneider et al. 2010). However, our approach is not restricted to this field. As it makes use of the generic linguistic structure of valuation statements, it is also applicable to the study of political *authorities* – i.e. political actors – and *policies*: It therefore provides a powerful tool that can contribute to a broad range of research topics.

Political valuation analysis defines individual propositions of an evaluative kind as its unit of analysis – evaluative statements. These propositions are defined as instances of published opinion and can be identified with the help of a stylized valuation “grammar” that comprises four key elements.

Table 1: *Elements of valuation grammar*

(1) valuation object (VO)
(2) valuation pattern (VP) as the normative benchmark of the judgment
(3) positive or negative thrust of the evaluation as the valuation direction (VD)
(4) speaker/author of the evaluative statement (SP)

With the help of the first three variables listed in Table 1 the method is not only well equipped to capture the assessment of objects in different communicative contexts in a very fine-grained manner, but also to provide information on the nexus of valuation object and criteria and the development of these aspects over time. With the additional notation of speakers (quoted or referred to in the text, otherwise the journalist/author responsible for the respective publication) as a fourth element, we can provide a comprehensive picture of evaluative statements in textual sources. The nature of our stylized valuation grammar is obviously more semantic than syntactical. Real-world political valuations may be formulated in a virtually unlimited number of ways. Similar to what Klingemann et al. call ‘quasi-sentences’ (2006), the ultimate identification of relevant statements, as well as their coding, thus entails a ‘reconstruction’ of manifest content and its translation into the variables of the valuation grammar.

Table 2: *Valuation “Grammar” and Examples*

Example 1: The agency in Brussels [EU Commission] is hardly a training ground for the mafia; yet considerable amounts of fraud, sloppiness, and corruption have occurred lately (<i>FAZ</i> , 16 December 1998).				
The EU	is	Because it	(1)	inefficient/
Commission...	illegitimate...	is...		ineffective
			(2)	not respecting
				legal standards.

Example 2: They [the G7/8] are pure conspicuous consumption, make-work for the ‘rich white trash’ of international diplomacy. They yield vacuous communiqués and mountains of unread paper. Their only substantive conclusion is ‘to meet again’ (*Times*, 20 July 2001).

The	is	Because it	(1) inefficient/ineffective;
G7/8...	illegitimate...	is...	(2) not representative (of the world population).

Example 3: The people and their representatives have been sent to the sidelines by the courts, and that’s not right (*Washington Post*, 6 February 2004).

The US judiciary...	is illegitimate...	because it...	undermines popular sovereignty.
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Our own research started with legitimation statements. They are a particular kind of valuation statement, characterized by a specific type of valuation object. Defined in the theoretical tradition of David Easton, statements of this kind evaluate (positively or negatively) political communities, political regimes and the basic institutional structures of political systems. Thus, legitimation analysis solely focuses on this fundamental level of political order.

However, Easton has distinguished two other groups of political objects in his general framework for political analysis: policies and authorities. We follow his threefold account of political objects and differentiate between three general groups of valuation objects and three respective variants of political valuation analysis (Table 3).

Table 3: *Variants of political valuation analysis*

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| (1) Legitimation analysis: evaluative statements about political orders, regimes, or communities, |
| (2) Policy valuation analysis: evaluative statements about policies, policy instruments, or policy reforms, |
| (3) Authority valuation analysis: evaluative statements about the current government, office-holders (president, chancellor), or individual politicians. |
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One can refer to an authority by quoting the personal name (“Angela Merkel”, “Obama”) or by using the official title (“the chancellor”, “White House”). A third way of putting it is to point to a group of persons in office (“current government”, “the CDU-ministers in the cabinet”). The following valuations of UN authorities illustrate this pointedly:

“The Taliban's chief ward, Osama bin Laden, was making the United Nations nervous. Over the weekend, he issued another of his videotaped messages, this time saying the world organization had aligned itself with "crusader" Western interests and against Muslims. Secretary General Kofi Annan is a "criminal," he said.” (*New York Times*, 09/11/2001) And for the opposite thrust: “Mr. Adams said Mr. Annan's political skills and personable approach to Americans is probably helping improve the image of the United Nations in the United States.” (*New York Times*, 21/09/1998) Furthermore, these examples demonstrate that valuations of individuals and groups of individuals build on a set of valuation patterns (VP) that is distinct from valuations of policies or political regimes. In general, authorities are often assessed on the basis of criteria that come under the heading of virtues and vices so that credibility and authenticity, for instance, play an important role in terms of the valuation of authorities in election campaigns. We concede potential overlap of sets of valuation patterns applied to political regimes and authorities respectively: For instance, both political regimes as well as the activity of individuals may be considered to be unjust. However, we assume that these two sets of valuation patterns have less in common than the pattern groups applied to the valuation of political regimes and policies and should, therefore, be kept apart analytically. Although empirical evidence for this conjecture is not readily available, the following example concerned with UN-interventions helps to illustrate this point: “Annan's message was ambitious. American hostility shows signs of fading. Peacekeeping should be the business of the UN as it recovers from the exaggerated expectations of the immediate post-cold war period, the bitter, debilitating failures of Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia - the list of interventions is not glorious.” (*Guardian*, 23/09/1999) To carve out the nexus between specific sets of valuation patterns and valuation objects – i.e. po-

litical regimes, authorities, and policies – and to provide respective empirical evidence is a core aspect of the further development of political valuation analysis.

4 Media Discourses as Material of Political Valuation Analysis

Our study of legitimization discourses in Germany, Switzerland, Britain, and the United States draws on a large corpus of newspaper articles, each of which contains at least one such statement and may be viewed as contributing to broader legitimization discourses. The corpus consists of public communication on the legitimacy of the four national political orders, and the international organizations of the European Union, the G7/8, and the United Nations between 1998 and 2007 (9,177 statements). As noted above, legitimization discourses unfold in different arenas of public spheres – in private conversations, in the parliamentary arena, or in the debates of political science or legal scholars, to name but a few (Thompson 2000). In our own research, however, we concentrate on the mass media – and more precisely, the quality press – of the four examined countries, given their key role for the constitution and development of public spheres in modern democratic societies (Habermas 2008). For each country, we examine two opinion-leading papers of the (center-)left and right: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Tagesanzeiger* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland), *Guardian* and *Times* (Great Britain), *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (United States).

Our European-US country sample is primarily motivated by the hypothesis that differences in terms of national institutional arrangements and political cultures (Lijphart 1999), as well as different national media systems (Hallin/Mancini 2004), should have an impact on the legitimization styles that prevail in each of the four national public spheres; there might also be characteristic differences between the continental European and Anglo-Saxon ‘families of nations’ or between discourses in German and English. In a similar vein, factors such as the (non-)membership

of the four countries in the EU and the G7/8, as well as the general multilateralism friendliness or skepticism of national political elites and citizens, ought to impact legitimation discourses. There is considerable variation in our sample with regard to those factors: The sample includes two EU members and two non-members, as well as three members and one non-member of the G7/8. Switzerland and the United States may – to varying degrees and for different reasons – be considered to be multilateralism-skeptical countries, while Britain (at least as far as the G7/8 and other intergovernmental arrangements are concerned) and especially Germany appear comparatively multilateralism-friendly (Müller 2002; Rittberger 2001b). The time period was selected with respect to the hypothesis that legitimation discourses are affected by processes of internationalization and deparliamentarization. Hence, we picked a time during which all selected countries were experiencing a strong turn towards the internationalization and privatization of traditional core areas of state activity (Kahler/Lake 2009; Leibfried/Zürn 2005; Sörensen 2004). As a comprehensive legitimation analysis for seven political regimes on the basis of two newspapers in four countries over a time span of ten years implies a massive workload, a sampling strategy was applied to reduce the effort. Following the notion of *intensity sampling*², data analysis was limited to time periods of presumably high public attention.

In practical terms, the presented analysis of legitimation discourses followed a three step procedure in order to extract valuation statements from mass media textual data: Text retrieval, text selection, and coding. In a first step, we designed an information extraction system that aimed at combining recall and precision (King/Lowe 2003). To this end, we devised automated search routines for each selected political regime – i.e. the national political regimes of Germany, Switzerland, Britain and the United States and the international political regimes of the European Union, the G7/8, and the United Nations – making use of the search

² Patton (2002) defines this method as the selection of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomena of interest intensely.

engine offered by the electronic newspaper archive *Factiva*³. It offers a broad array of Boolean operators that support the construction of complex search routines. In a number of pretests, search routines were established and redefined until they fulfilled the criterion of validity. Without going into the details of this process, it can be noted that search words included a variety of potential valuation objects, such as ‘parliament’, ‘democracy’ or – with respect to the selected international organizations – ‘UN’, ‘Security Council’, ‘EU’, ‘Brussels’, ‘Commission’, or ‘G8’. While these search routines successfully minimized the number of ‘false negatives’ (included most of the relevant articles) they were less effective in filtering out ‘false positives’ – that is articles without recognizable valuation statements. Hence, after downloading and storing the material retrieved by the automated search in files generated by the text analysis software MaxQDA, text selection had to be refined by human coders. Obviously irrelevant articles that did not contain statements which could be ‘translated’ into the valuation grammar were to be discarded directly. To reduce particular coder bias, the corpora were apportioned equally so that each coder had to deal with articles on all the selected regimes, from every newspaper, and time period. The reliability of this second text selection procedure was probed on the basis of a formal inter-coder reliability test. Ambiguous cases were discussed and jointly decided by the group of coders. On average, approximately 10 percent of texts found by the search routine appeared to be relevant with reference to the valuation grammar.

Finally, the text corpora compiled this way were firstly searched for valuation statements and, secondly, coded according to a detailed codebook that gives a number of subsidiary rules and provides explanations and examples with regard to all variables of the valuation grammar. The basic rule for coders was to avoid over-interpretation and to stick to the manifest text as much as possible. Valuation object and direction of potential statements had to be explicitly stated. Wherever ambiguities remained, propositions were not included. Cases in which the iron-

³ <http://global.factiva.com>

ic or non-ironic tone of propositions and, hence, the positive or negative thrust of valuations remained unclear, were excluded, together with valuation statements that were *presumably implied* in other types of propositions. These included conditional sentences ('if the United Nations Security Council is not reformed, it will no longer be able to deal with situations of international crisis') and political demands ('the UN Security Council must become more democratic'), because the 'translation' of such propositions implies excessive qualitative interpretation. In addition, historical statements ('in 1945 the founding of the United Nations was a good idea') were ignored because they do not contribute to the analysis of the current valuation of political regimes. Finally, as noted above, evaluative statements may be more complex than suggested by the valuation grammar in the sense that they include more than one valuation object or pattern, or weigh positive and negative assessments against each other. Consider the following examples:

- 'The decision-making processes in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly are unwieldy'. (two valuation objects, one valuation pattern)
- 'The members of UN bureaucracy have no democratic legitimacy and are totally ignorant' (one valuation object, two valuation patterns)
- 'The Security Council may well be undemocratic – but it helps to solve international crises' (one valuation object, two valuation patterns with weighting of positive and negative assessments).

In each of these situations or when they are combined, we broke down the complex statements into simple ones, reducing the number of valuation object, pattern, or direction to exactly one per statement. In the first case, for instance, we would have coded one statement for the Security Council and one for the General Assembly; in the second case one statement for each valuation pattern, and one positive and one negative statement in the third case. Although this procedure entailed a certain loss of information, it facilitated the organization of our data-set.

Following these rules, individual human coders noted valuation object, direction, pattern, speaker, and some further variables with the help of previously constructed lists of both theoretically and empirically relevant single items for each identified statement. As with the text selection procedure, corpora were portioned equally among coders. In addition, after individual coding had finished, there were multiple rounds of cross-checks in which each coder checked another coder's work. This process helped to increase the inter-coder reliability as well as the validity of our results (for a similar approach see King/Lowe 2003).

5 Valuating the United Nations

To exemplify the strengths of political valuation analysis, the following section applies the method to public legitimacy debates on the United Nations in four Western democracies (Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, and USA) for the time span between 1998 and 2007 and asks for national differences and similarities. Since "the UN occupies a totemic position in the world, for many a symbol of hope, for a few a mire of corruption, and for one home to the Smurfs [...]" (*Guardian*, 15/09/2005) it constitutes an especially interesting object of study for political valuation analysis. Founded in 1945 in San Francisco by 51 nations, today its membership comprises 192 countries. Being, therefore, the strongest international security organization in membership, some consider it a central actor in international relations (Rittberger 2001a; Weiss/Daws 2008). Others dispute its legitimacy on various accounts (Caron 1993; Chesterman 2002; Hurd 2008) and discuss especially the role of the Security Council (SC). While some diagnose a crisis of legitimacy (Johnstone 2008; Wheeler/Morris 2007) of the "Horseshoe Table" (Gharekhan 2006), others point out that it possesses the unique ability to legitimize the use of force (Claude 1966; Voeten 2005). Political valuation analysis provides a powerful tool to link such academic debates to public discourses. Contrary to survey research, which is limited to a comparably high level of abstraction and can rarely account for developments over time, our method is

well equipped to retrieve detailed information on these particular aspects of public debates. It helps, for instance, to probe into the question of whether public discussions focus as strongly on the UN Security Council (valuation object) as is currently the case in political science literature, to find out whether there is indeed a crisis of its legitimacy (Wheeler/Morris 2007), and whether the various commissions dealing with potential ways to reform the UN to “increase the number of actors who identify with and uphold the values of a liberal international order” (Barnett 1997) addressed the right issues (valuation patterns). Furthermore, political valuation analysis features the possibility to differentiate this information with respect to specific national discursive cultures (Biegoń et al. 2010), and to track the development of public debates over time.

To demonstrate some of these features we briefly delineate the scope of the debates with regard to the amount of evaluative statements and their valuation direction (positive/negative) before the remainder of the section goes on to provide a detailed description of valuation patterns and objects applied to the legitimacy of the UN. We demonstrate that political valuation analysis has on the one hand the potential to lay bare specific details of public debates and show, on the other hand, how such individual patterns can be integrated into theoretically inspired categories that help to provide the bigger picture. In this vein, we show that in all four selected countries, debates focus on similar groups of valuation criteria but that on a closer view national specificities can still be identified. This result highlights that contrary to survey research, which is restricted to predefined categories and items, our method features very flexible ways of moving back and forth between theory and data. Categories can be redefined and adapted to empirical realities and questions emerging from quantitative results can be readdressed by qualitative reexaminations of specific sections of text.

5.1 Level of public valuations

In total, the UN corpus contains 1.116 evaluative statements dealing with the entire international organization of the United

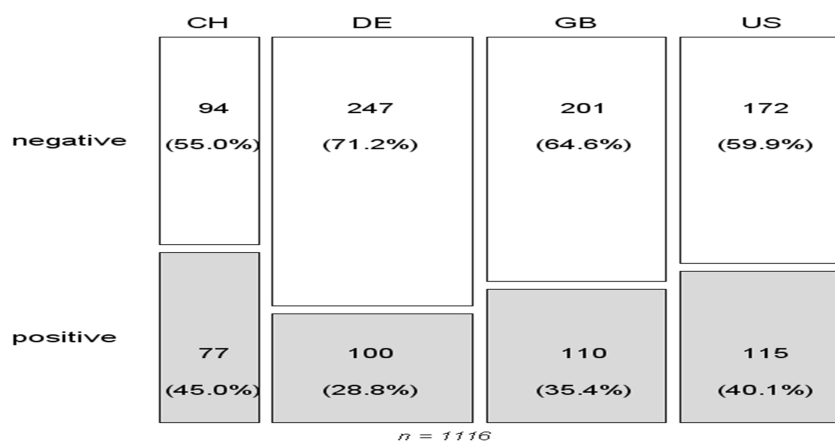
Nations or with some of its particular aspects, norms, core institutions, or actors.

Table 4: *UN-General Assembly Meetings – Dates, Valuation statements per country and year*

Date	CH	DE	GB	US	Σ
21/09/-02/10/1998	4	15	4	15	38
20/09/-02/10/1999	11	25	29	29	94
12/09/-22/09/2000	2	3	1	10	16
10/11/-16/11/2001	1	19	10	29	59
12/09/-20/09/2002	45	25	56	46	172
23/09/-02/10/2003	22	42	50	55	169
21/09/-30/09/2004	14	52	46	23	135
14/09/-19/09/2005	46	114	84	45	289
19/09/-27/09/2006	11	32	26	31	100
25/09/-03/10/2007	15	20	5	4	44
(1998-2007)	171	347	311	287	1116

To give a first overview on the data that can be generated by the method we direct our attention to some basic indicators about how often the UN is evaluated in our selected countries and the proportions of positive and negative valuations.

Figure 1: *Level of valuation statements and valuation direction per country*



Note: The width of the column shows the relative distribution of statements across countries. The respective white and grey parts indicate the distribution of positive and negative valuations per country.

As Figure 1 indicates, it can firstly be noted that the UN can be considered to be a relevant issue of public debate. Although to a varying degree, all four analyzed national publics take note of the organization and evaluate it considerably. Our analysis contributes furthermore to a comparison of these debates across countries and helps to demonstrate that different levels of attention are paid to the UN. While we observe the highest number of valuation statements in Germany (347), that took a seat at the Security Council during the analyzed period (2003-2004), less than half of this amount can, for instance, be noted in the case of Switzerland, (171) that only joined the organization in 2002 and, therefore, might have been less attentive in the beginning of the analyzed time span. Both founding members that hold a veto in the Security Council – Great Britain and the US – rank between these two states with total amounts of valuation statements of 311 and 287 respectively.

In contrast to national differences with respect to the level of valuation, our data suggests a more similar picture in terms of valuation direction. In Switzerland (45.0 percent), Great Britain (35.4 percent), and the US (40.1 percent) we observe quite similar proportions of positive statements that point to a rather stable legitimization of the United Nations in these countries. Only the value of the German debate (28.8 Percent) deviates considerably from this pattern by dropping to a low level of positive valuations that can be interpreted as an indicator for the United Nations' precarious state of legitimization in the German debate.

5.2 Valuation Patterns

Having clarified the basic structure of our data and the four national legitimization discourses on the UN, we direct our attention to one particular strength of our method; namely the analysis of valuation criteria. As such criteria are often hidden in complex contexts of meaning, they cannot be detected by simply counting words but have to be carved out in a more qualitative procedure. In our study on the legitimacy of the United Nations we did just that and asked which criteria are applied in the four selected pub-

lic discourses with respect to the political valuation of the UN, can we observe national differences, and does their relevancy vary over time?

To answer these three sets of questions we identified 29 criteria which we assume to constitute potential normative foundations for the valuation of political regimes. These valuation patterns are partly drawn from the literature on democratic theory and the legitimacy of political regimes, and partly inductively extracted from the textual material used for the inquiry at hand (for a detailed list see for instance Nullmeier et al. 2010: 53). Where survey research is limited to predefined categories, political valuation analysis enables the adaptation of categories and is thus better equipped to depict the richness of empirical reality. With respect to our theoretical concerns, we classified valuation patterns with the help of a two dimensional typology. The first organizing distinction is provided by Scharpf's (1999) broadly accepted typology of input and output legitimacy. It refers to the notion that valuation statements can either discuss the quality of a decision making process or its respective results. While valuations of the first type are considered to fall into the input category, we classify the latter as output-related. The second distinction builds on the idea that legitimacy valuations may either refer to democracy-based criteria such as popular sovereignty, or to non-democracy-based issues such as the effectiveness of political regimes. The distinction between democracy-based and non-democracy-based criteria builds on an undemanding definition of democracy offered by Schmitter and Karl: "a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives" (1991: 76). This definition allows space to include a variety of input and output aspects of an institution that can be relevant for the existence of such a system. Evaluation criteria pointing to these aspects are classified as democracy-based, whereas arguments referring to elements not essential – though not necessarily antithetical – to a democratic system of governance are classified as non-democracy-based (Hurrelmann et al. 2005: 123).

In sum, these distinctions result in four categories of valuation patterns: democracy-based input (DI), democracy-based output (DO), non-democracy-based input (NDI), and non-democracy-based output (NDO). In addition to these four categories we introduce a fifth group of general valuations that do not make use of an explicit criterion or refer to other rather peculiar arguments that do not fit the typology.

Figure 2: *Valuation patterns per country*

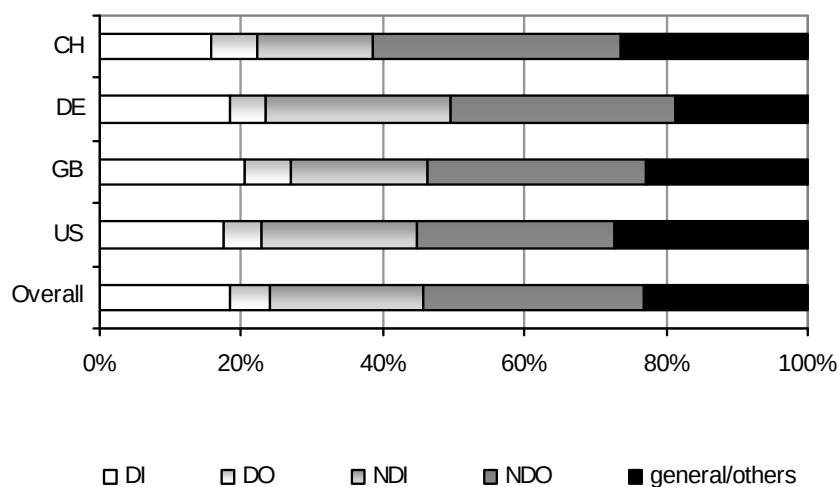
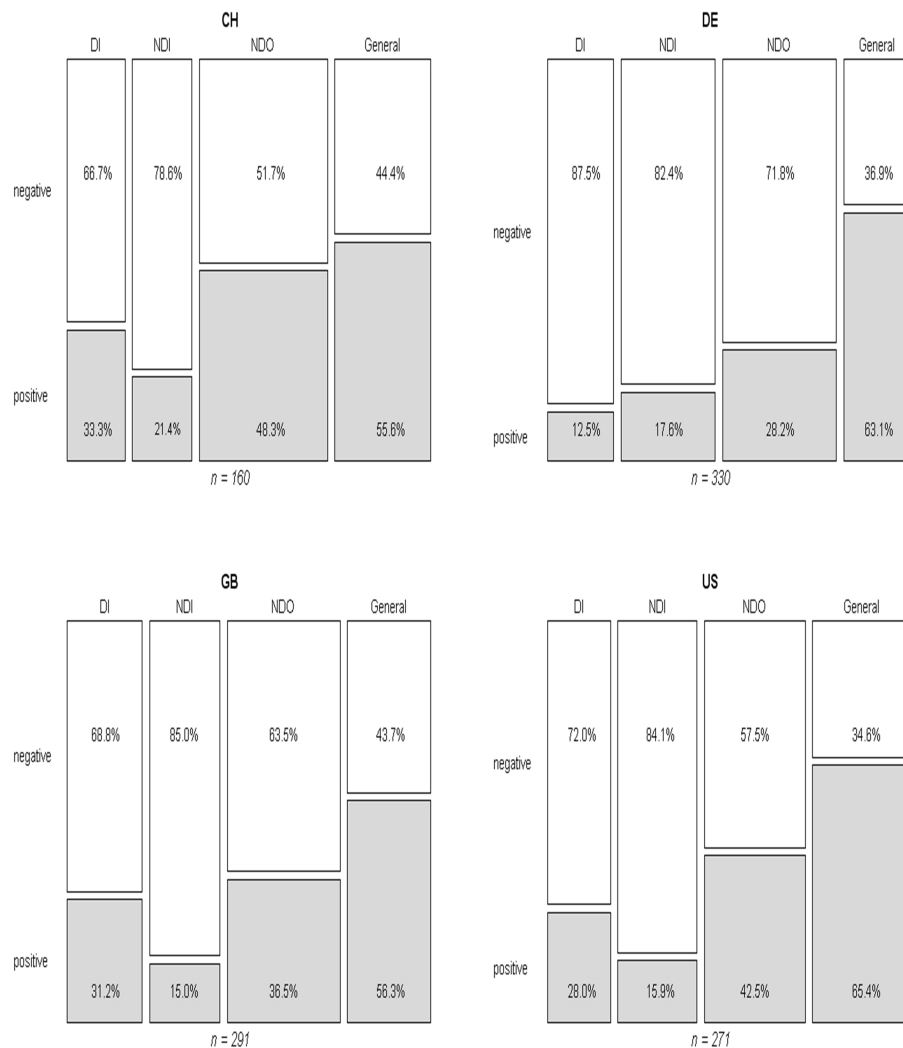


Figure 2 provides an overview about the general distribution of valuation patterns and their particular weight in the selected countries. It reveals remarkably similar distribution patterns for all four democracies. With an overall share of 31.0 percent, NDO patterns play the most important role in each country. Referring to a lack of efficiency, the Australian government is for instance cited in the *Washington Post* (17/11/2001), criticizing that “the United Nations was wasting money in caring for millions of refugees around the world” while former US president Bill Clinton compliments the organizations’ contribution to international stability when he states that “The United Nations is actively mediating crises before they explode into war all around the world.” (*Washington Post*, 22/09/1998) Interestingly, the second rank is taken in all countries but Germany – where NDI valuation pat-

terns play a slightly more important role – by statements that refer to “[...] the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations [...]” (*Times*, 24/09/2003) without reference to a particular pattern (23.2 percent). It seems that in a variety of similar statements the UN is assumed to possess the ability of “collective legitimization” (Claude 1966: 367), which in turn implies the legitimacy of the organization (Voeten 2005). Almost as relevant as these statements are considerations of NDI (21.7 percent) and DI (18.4 percent) criteria which argue for instance that “[t]here is no alternative to the United Nations ... Multilateralism is the key, for it ensures the participation of all in the management of world affairs. It is a guarantee of legitimacy and democracy.” (*Times*, 24/09/2003). A distant fifth rank is occupied by the group of democracy-based output (DO) patterns because we rarely observed statements that address “[...] the United Nations’ failure to resolve human rights abuses [...]” or to provide other democratic goods so that in sum we can note a threefold structure of the distribution pattern. While we see non-democracy-based output (NDO) criteria to play the most important role for legitimization discourses on the United Nations, we discovered three categories to be of median weight (DI, NDI, General Valuations). As democracy-based output (DO) criteria are only of marginal relevance to all four public debates, we leave that group aside in the below Figure 3.

Figure 3: *Valuation Pattern and Level of Positive Valuations per country*

Note: The width of the column shows the relative distribution of statements across pattern groups. The respective white and grey parts indicate the distribution of negative and positive valuations per group.

Having clarified the general structure of the valuation patterns, more in-depth questions may be asked on the patterns' valuation direction, specific criteria that constitute a stronghold of the United Nations' legitimacy and prime target of criticism respectively, and even developments over time.

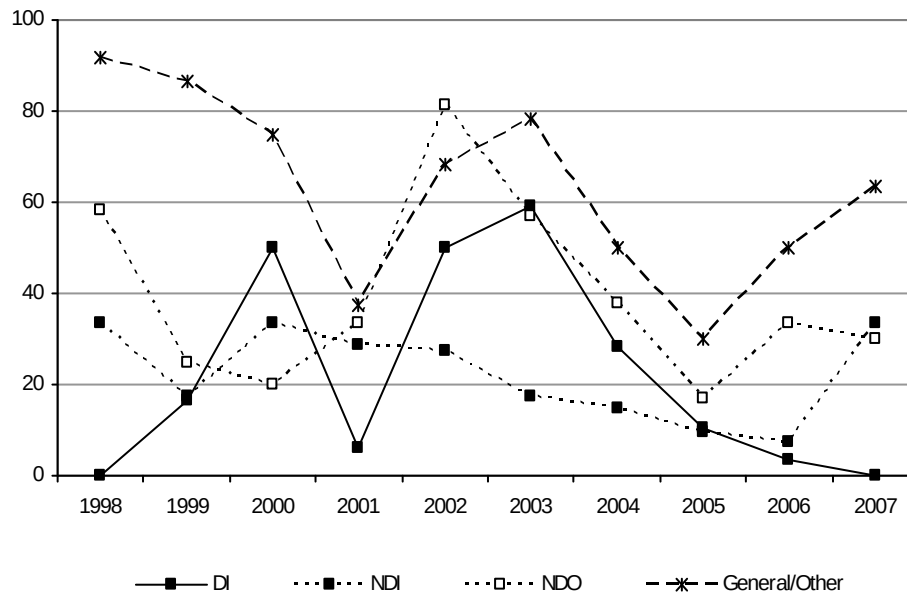
For our research on the legitimacy of the UN it is not only important to discover which valuation patterns are relevant in the selected debates but also their respective level of positive valua-

tions constitutes a second key variable. Only if we link frequency distributions and data on valuation direction, it becomes possible to understand which pattern groups enhance/damage the legitimacy of the United Nations in public debates. Figure 3 depicts this relationship for the four significant pattern groups. Comparison of the four national patterns helps firstly to confirm similarity across our countries. We find both democracy-based input and non-democracy-based input valuation patterns to be the groups that attract the strongest criticism in all selected democracies. Although the ranking of the two varies across the four discourses, political valuation analysis helps to demonstrate that political processes in the UN constitute an issue for its legitimacy. We can even zoom in on single valuation criteria and detect the prime targets of negative valuations: questions of participation – that contribute 5.4 percent of all statements but only attract positive valuations in 11.7 percent of the cases – but also the non-democracy-based patterns of the organization's capability to act and its institutional ability to moderate between various national preferences are the most prominent criteria in that respect. Consequently, the *Guardian's* (29/09/2004) citation of the Lebanese *Daily Star's* comment on the Security Council arguing that "[t]he insecurity council – let's call a spade a spade here – is an unrepresentative, undemocratic, unmonitored forum [...]" depicts very well one of the core issue for the United Nations in public debates: Its political processes and procedures are often considered to be inadequate.

The major stronghold of the organization's legitimacy is on the other hand constituted by its non-democracy-based output and even more importantly by general valuations that seem to communicate a sense of undisputed agreement. A comment of Yasir Arafat quoted in the *New York Times* (29/09/1998) exemplifies the interaction of both pattern groups by pointing to the UN as "[...] the source of international legitimacy and peacemaking, the guardian of freedom, security and stability, and the source for the achievement of justice and prosperity for humankind [...]." Although its processes do not always live up to the highest standards, its policy output and especially its contribution to peace and

stability still provide a strong source of legitimacy in all four selected democracies.

Figure 4: *Positive Valuations for Pattern Groups over Time*



So far the presented findings remain in a static perspective as they do not take into account developments over time. However, political valuation analysis is by no means limited to this perspective. The applicability of the method to tracing processes over time is demonstrated by our results on the development of the level of positive valuations of pattern groups. As valuations of the UN were analyzed at ten points in time, we are able to compare the level of positive valuations so that particular trends such as the convergence of national discourses or the increasing relevancy of pattern groups or single patterns can be detected.

Figure 4 depicts the development of the level of positive valuations of the four most relevant pattern groups. With respect to the question of trends it can be noted that no steady increase of positive valuation can be observed for either one of the groups. By contrast, the development pattern of the group of non-democracy-based input criteria seems to be approaching a state of absolute disapproval. In general, however, the development patterns seem to imply that the application of particular valuation patterns does not follow particular trends but is rather directed by

what Downs (1972) once called ‘attention cycles’. Periods of positive valuations are followed by time spans of decreasing levels of support. Such cyclical developments can be triggered by particular events. In the case of debates concerned with the United Nations, it might well be that the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have triggered such effects.

5.3 Valuation Objects

As mentioned above, literature dealing with the legitimacy of the UN reveals a strong focus on the Security Council as an object of valuation (Hurd 2008). Whether this is also the case in public debates can be inferred from our analysis of valuation objects. Similar to the procedure applied to the categorization of valuation criteria we identified a list of 26 single objects which we assume to constitute potential issues of public debates. Again we grouped these items into four categories: the organization of the UN as a whole (I), its regime principles – e.g. the principle of collective security and the UN-Charter – (II), its core institutions such as the Security Council and the General Assembly (III), and groups of actors referring for instance to the group of member states (IV).

Table 5: *Valuation Objects and Share of Positive Valuations*

Valuation Objects	%	Positive Valuations (%)
<i>Organization as a whole (I)</i>	58.2	44.6
Political System	54.5	46.4
Political Community	3.8	19.0
<i>Regime Principles (II)</i>	7.6	72.9
Collective Security	5.0	73.2
International Law	1.8	70.2
Democracy	0.7	87.5
<i>Core Institutions (III)</i>	29.5	12.9
General Assembly	13.7	13.7
Security Council	11.9	13.5
Bureaucracy and Secretary General	2.0	13.6
<i>Groups of Actors (IV)</i>	5.0	14.3
Member States	4.4	12.2
Political Elites	0.6	28.6
N = 1116	100.0	36.0

The table shows the portions of object groups, their respective levels of positive valuations as well as the three most frequent single items per group.

Table 5 gives an overview about the frequency distribution of object groups and shows the portions of positive valuations per group. The heterogeneity of valuation groups is striking. While we observe a strong focus of evaluative propositions on the organization as a whole (I) which attracts a total of 58.2 percent of all statements and its core institutions (III) which are discussed in 29.5 percent of all cases, both group II (7.6 percent) dealing with core principles and IV (5.0 percent) referring to the actor groups are only of marginal relevancy. Hence, compared to all valuation objects the Security Council seems not to be singled out for particular criticism in public debates. Even upon closer examination of single items we observe that not only valuations of the United Nation as a whole but also of the General Assembly are more frequent than public discussions referring to the Security Council. However, the table reveals the critical thrust of propositions concerned with the Security Council. Almost half of the assessments of the entire organization display a positive valuation di-

rection (44.6 percent), whereas we observe only 13.7 percent positive statements dealing with the Security Council. Similar to the General Assembly, the Security Council can therefore be noted not to attract the most attention in public debates on the legitimacy of the UN but still to be a prime target of negative valuations. Hence, scientific literature can be considered to be partly in line with the public discourse on the UN.

6 Conclusion

In sum, the present example of political valuation analysis demonstrated some possible applications of the method. It can help to generate some basic understanding of how public debates about political regimes, authorities, or policies are structured in terms of valuation objects, direction and patterns. We illustrated its usefulness to cross-country comparison and diachronic process analysis and highlighted different ways of linking the variables of valuation object, direction, and pattern. In this sense, the method can be considered to provide a high degree of flexibility so that it can easily be tailored to research objectives other than the legitimacy of political regimes. First, this applies to valuations of specific policies. By analyzing the development of policy evaluations, the method of political valuation analysis can be adapted to policy studies. In addition, the evaluation of authorities can be gauged with the help of the method. However, interest in this field of research is currently underdeveloped and mainly restricted to private consulting agencies. Without major modifications, political valuation analysis can also be adapted to objects different from those defined by Easton: situations, for example. In this regard, one might for instance think of the overall political situation of a country or the demographic developments in the EU countries and its impacts on the European labor market.

Apart from such further applications, political valuation analysis may contribute to a more systematic advancement of methods for content analysis and discourse analysis. In this respect, our contribution may help to ask for the generic components of content analysis in political science. We suggest that apart from the

highlighted evaluative components here, such an integrated approach requires descriptive, causal-explanatory, and prescriptive elements. Building on political claims analysis it may be possible to integrate all elements relevant to text analysis in the field of political science (at least these four components: descriptive, causal-explanatory, prescriptive, and evaluative components). Such an integrated method would provide concrete guidelines to facilitate comparability in various fields of political science and – most of all – a quicker start for text-oriented research.

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