

How Superior Authority Cultivates Public Rage to Legitimize Ruling Regimes

Dr. Dawinder Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Punjab College of Commerce and Agriculture, Chunni Kalan, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

Abstract

Authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes across the globe have historically deployed strategic emotional governance as a mechanism of political legitimation. This paper presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) examining the relationship between state-orchestrated public rage and regime legitimacy across political, sociological, and communication studies disciplines. Drawing on 74 peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2024 and indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR, this review synthesizes empirical and theoretical frameworks through which superior authorities — defined as states, ruling elites, and dominant political institutions — cultivate, direct, and instrumentalize collective anger to stabilize and justify their governance. The analysis identifies five core mechanisms: enemy construction and scapegoating, media manipulation and emotional priming, nationalist emotional scripts, crisis manufacturing, and institutional rage normalization. Findings reveal that manufactured rage functions not merely as a byproduct of political instability but as an engineered governing technology embedded in regime survival strategies. This paper contributes a cross-disciplinary synthesized framework — the Rage-Legitimation Cycle (RLC) — advancing understanding of emotional authoritarianism in the 21st century. Implications for political science, communication studies, and civil society are discussed.

Keywords: authoritarian legitimation, manufactured rage, emotional governance, political scapegoating, nationalist affect, systematic literature review

1. Introduction

Political legitimacy — the degree to which a governing authority is perceived as rightful and worthy of obedience — has long been considered the cornerstone of stable governance. Classical theorists from Weber (1919/1946) to Habermas (1975) argued that legitimacy derives from rational-legal norms, democratic consent, or procedural justice. Yet a growing body of empirical and theoretical literature challenges this rationalist premise, demonstrating that emotional mobilization — particularly the strategic cultivation of public anger — constitutes an equally powerful, if less formally recognized, source of regime legitimacy (Hoggett & Thompson, 2012; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017).

Anger, as a political emotion, is distinctive. Unlike fear, which tends to produce compliance and withdrawal, or grief, which promotes solidarity and mourning, rage is action-oriented, energizing, and directional (Averill, 1983; Marcus et al., 2000). It demands an object — a target

— and a resolution, typically framed as justice, revenge, or collective defense. This directionality makes public rage uniquely exploitable by political elites who can channel collective grievances toward pre-selected enemies, thereby consolidating popular support, suppressing internal dissent, and justifying extraordinary state powers (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

This phenomenon is not confined to textbook authoritarian states. Contemporary scholarship documents rage-legitimation strategies in electoral democracies, hybrid regimes, and competitive autocracies alike (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Schedler, 2013). The mechanisms vary — from overt state media campaigns to algorithmic social media amplification — but the underlying architecture remains consistent: superior authorities identify or construct a source of collective threat, prime citizens for emotional response, and position the ruling regime as the singular protector and avenger of the aggrieved public.

Despite growing scholarly attention to populism, affective polarization, and emotional politics, the literature lacks a unified analytical framework that synthesizes how authoritarian and semi-authoritarian actors *systematically* cultivate public rage as a governing technology. This paper addresses that gap through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), mapping the mechanisms, contexts, and consequences of state-orchestrated rage across diverse political environments.

The central research question guiding this review is: *How do superior authorities cultivate public rage to legitimize their ruling regimes, and what mechanisms sustain this process?*

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Legitimacy Beyond Rational Consent

Weber's (1919/1946) tripartite typology of legitimacy — traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal — dominated political sociology for much of the 20th century. Yet subsequent scholars have argued that this framework underweights the emotional and psychological dimensions of political authority. Easton (1965) distinguished between *specific support* (satisfaction with policy outputs) and *diffuse support* (generalized attachment to political community), recognizing that legitimacy operates across both cognitive and affective registers.

Habermas (1975) further theorized a *legitimation crisis* in late capitalism, arguing that states unable to deliver substantive welfare must resort to alternative mechanisms of popular compliance. This insight proved prescient: contemporary regimes facing economic underperformance or institutional decay increasingly turn to emotional mobilization as a substitute for material legitimation (Guriev & Treisman, 2019).

2.2 Emotion in Political Life

Political psychology has demonstrated that emotions are not distortions of rational political judgment but fundamental components of political cognition and behavior (Marcus et al., 2000). Affective intelligence theory (Marcus, 2002) argues that anxiety and enthusiasm — and

by extension, anger — profoundly shape political attention, information processing, and participation.

Anger, specifically, has been identified as a politically activating emotion that increases risk tolerance, reduces information-seeking, and amplifies in-group/out-group distinctions (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). When politically directed, these properties make anger a potent tool for mobilizing collective action and directing it toward regime-sanctioned targets (Jasper, 2011).

2.3 Emotional Authoritarianism

Salmela and von Scheve (2017) coined the concept of *emotional authoritarianism* to describe how political movements and regimes exploit negative emotional states — particularly shame, fear, and resentment — to consolidate power. They argue that neoliberal economic restructuring produced widespread emotional precarity that authoritarian actors could capture and redirect toward populist and nationalist programs.

Building on this foundation, subsequent scholars have examined the specific role of rage. Norris and Inglehart's (2019) cultural backlash thesis argues that durable status anxieties among traditionally dominant groups fuel reactive rage that populist leaders exploit. Müller (2016) identifies a structural feature of populism — its claim to exclusive moral representation of "the people" — that requires a demonized other against whom public anger is directed.

2.4 The Regime Legitimation Function of Rage

Linz (2000) and Geddes (1999) described authoritarian survival as dependent on coalition management, repression, and co-optation. However, newer scholarship emphasizes a fourth dimension: *emotional governance*, defined as the deliberate management of collective affective states to produce political outcomes favorable to the ruling apparatus (Bericat, 2016; Flam & King, 2005). Within this framework, cultivated rage serves four legitimation functions: it justifies extraordinary state powers; it suppresses internal dissent by redirecting critical energy outward; it creates solidarity through shared emotional experience; and it delegitimizes opposition by associating it with the hated enemy (Wedeen, 1999).

3. Methodology

3.1 Systematic Literature Review Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). SLR was selected over narrative review because the research question is empirically grounded, the literature is vast and multidisciplinary, and synthesis requires transparent, reproducible selection criteria.

3.2 Search Strategy

Database searches were conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar in March 2024. The following Boolean search strings were employed:

- ("authoritarian legitimacy" OR "regime legitimation") AND ("public anger" OR "political rage" OR "manufactured outrage")
- ("emotional governance" OR "affective authoritarianism") AND ("political mobilization" OR "populism")
- ("scapegoating" OR "enemy construction") AND ("authoritarian" OR "ruling regime")
- ("nationalist affect" OR "collective anger") AND ("state media" OR "propaganda")
- ("crisis manufacturing" OR "threat inflation") AND ("political legitimacy")

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria: Peer-reviewed articles and book chapters published between 2000 and 2024; indexed in Scopus or Web of Science; written in English; addressing authoritarian or semi-authoritarian political contexts; analytically engaging with emotional mobilization, legitimacy, or regime survival.

Exclusion criteria: Opinion pieces, editorials, or non-peer-reviewed commentary; studies focused exclusively on democratic consolidation without reference to emotional governance; studies on individual-level psychopathology without political systemic analysis; duplicate publications.

3.4 PRISMA Flow

Initial database searches yielded 4,312 records. After duplicate removal, 3,847 unique records remained. Title and abstract screening eliminated 3,491 records. Full-text review of 356 articles resulted in final inclusion of 74 studies meeting all criteria. Supplementary sources, including foundational theoretical texts and government reports cited within included studies, were incorporated for background but not counted among the primary corpus.

3.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data were extracted using a standardized coding framework capturing: geographic context, regime type, mechanism of rage cultivation, theoretical framework, methodological approach, and key findings. Thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) was applied to identify recurring patterns across the corpus, producing five primary mechanism clusters.

3.6 Quality Assessment

Included studies were assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT; Hong et al., 2018) and the Qualitative Research Quality Checklist (CASP, 2018). Studies scoring below 60% on applicable criteria were excluded at full-text review stage. The final corpus

demonstrates high methodological quality overall, though cross-national comparative studies exhibit greater heterogeneity in measurement approaches.

4. Findings: Mechanisms of Rage Cultivation

Thematic synthesis of the 74 included studies produced five primary mechanisms through which superior authorities cultivate public rage to legitimize ruling regimes. These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive; in practice, they function as an integrated system.

4.1 Mechanism 1: Enemy Construction and Scapegoating

The most consistently documented mechanism across the reviewed literature is the deliberate construction of internal or external enemies upon whom collective grievances are focused. Wedeen (1999) demonstrated this in her landmark analysis of Assad's Syria, showing how the Ba'athist state created ritual performances of loyalty and rage against designated enemies regardless of whether citizens privately believed regime propaganda. The enemy-construction process operates not through persuasion but through *compelled performance*, which itself produces social effects independent of genuine belief.

Across the corpus, enemies fall into three typological categories: ethnic or religious minorities (Berenschot, 2011; Wilkinson, 2004); foreign powers or international institutions (Guriev & Treisman, 2022); and domestic political opposition (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Schedler, 2013). The selection of enemy type is not arbitrary but calibrated to existing social fault lines. Regimes in societies with deep ethnic or sectarian divisions exploit communal tensions as ready-made emotional infrastructure (Varshney, 2002). Regimes facing economic crises favor external enemies that externalize blame for domestic failures (Guriev & Treisman, 2019).

Scapegoating functions as legitimation through a specific emotional logic: by attributing public suffering to a named enemy, the regime simultaneously explains collective hardship, absolves itself of responsibility, and positions itself as the protector of the aggrieved population. Müller (2016) described this dynamic as the "populist claim," wherein the leader presents herself as the authentic voice of the "real people" against corrupt or malevolent others. Crucially, this claim is *not falsifiable* within the emotional frame it creates — criticism of the leader becomes evidence of enemy infiltration.

Studies from Hungary, Turkey, India, Russia, Venezuela, and the Philippines demonstrate the cross-regional applicability of this mechanism (Applebaum, 2020; Krastev & Holmes, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Taggart, 2000). The specific enemy varies, but the structural function — channeling diffuse resentment toward a concrete, emotionally charged target — is consistent.

4.2 Mechanism 2: Media Manipulation and Emotional Priming

The reviewed literature extensively documents the role of state-aligned media ecosystems in manufacturing and sustaining public rage. In classic authoritarian contexts, this operates through direct state control of broadcast and print media (Huang, 2015; Stockmann, 2013). In

hybrid and competitive authoritarian regimes, it involves subtler mechanisms: preferential regulatory treatment for loyalist outlets, strategic advertising placement, selective licensing, and the leveraging of social media algorithms (Guriev & Treisman, 2022; Tucker et al., 2017).

Emotional priming research demonstrates that repeated exposure to emotionally loaded content creates chronic activation of the anger response system, lowering the threshold for rage reactions and increasing susceptibility to elite cues (Valentino et al., 2011). State media in authoritarian contexts consistently deploys narrative frames — threat, invasion, betrayal, humiliation — that prime audiences for anger prior to directing that anger toward specific targets (Stockmann, 2013).

The digital media environment has dramatically amplified this mechanism. Bradshaw and Howard (2019) documented computational propaganda operations across 70 countries, demonstrating that state and state-aligned actors systematically use social media bots, troll farms, and algorithmic manipulation to amplify emotionally activating content and suppress moderating voices. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) described the resulting *information disorder* as a deliberate political strategy rather than a byproduct of platform economics.

Particularly significant is the role of outrage-driven engagement algorithms. Studies demonstrate that content producing anger generates substantially higher engagement than content producing other emotions (Brady et al., 2017), creating economic incentives for emotionally escalatory content that state actors exploit without needing to directly produce it. The regime benefits from algorithmically amplified rage it did not manufacture, achieving legitimization effects at reduced political cost and with greater deniability (Rooduijn, 2019).

4.3 Mechanism 3: Nationalist Emotional Scripts

A third mechanism identified across the corpus involves the deployment of nationalist ideological frameworks that provide pre-existing emotional scripts through which collective rage is given meaning, direction, and moral justification. Nationalism, as Billig (1995) demonstrated, is not merely a cognitive identity but a deeply affective structure that makes particular emotional responses — pride, humiliation, solidarity, revenge — feel natural, appropriate, and obligatory.

Superior authorities exploit nationalist emotional scripts by framing political events as episodes in an ongoing national narrative of glory, humiliation, and redemption (Applebaum, 2020; Snyder, 2018). Contemporary grievances — economic inequality, status decline, cultural change — are translated into nationalist emotional terms, becoming instances of a familiar story in which the nation is under threat and its leaders are its defenders. This narrative translation serves to legitimate both the intensity of rage and the authority of those who position themselves as its proper channelers.

Salmela and von Scheve (2017) argued that nationalist emotional scripts function through the activation of *ressentiment* — a compound emotional state combining resentment, envy, and perceived humiliation that Nietzsche originally described and that contemporary political psychology has operationalized. Ressentiment is particularly susceptible to authoritarian

capture because it is both chronic (rooted in durable status anxieties) and directional (seeking a blamed other), making it a stable fuel for sustained political rage.

Studies from Russia, China, Poland, Hungary, and India demonstrate how state-aligned nationalist movements have built elaborate emotional infrastructure — museums of national suffering, commemorative rituals, historical revisionism, educational curricula — that systematically cultivates the emotional preconditions for rage and positions ruling elites as the appropriate respondents (Krastev & Holmes, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Snyder, 2018).

4.4 Mechanism 4: Crisis Manufacturing and Threat Inflation

The fourth mechanism identified in the literature concerns the deliberate manufacture or strategic exaggeration of crises and threats that trigger collective anger and justify extraordinary state responses. Schedler (2013) noted that authoritarian regimes routinely engineer political emergencies that allow them to consolidate power while appearing to respond to legitimate collective fears. Crisis manufacturing operates across three subtypes documented in the reviewed literature.

The first subtype involves *threat inflation* — the systematic exaggeration of genuine security threats to produce disproportionate public fear and rage. Posen (2003) documented how political elites amplify security threats through selective intelligence disclosure, emotionally charged rhetoric, and the amplification of worst-case scenarios. The resulting public anger legitimates aggressive state responses and provides cover for the suppression of domestic dissent under security justifications.

The second subtype involves *crisis provocation* — instances where state actors deliberately provoke reactions from designated enemies in order to generate incidents that justify punitive responses. While direct evidence of crisis provocation is difficult to document, several cross-national studies present compelling circumstantial evidence of strategic escalation in contexts including Russia's approach to Ukraine prior to 2014, China's management of Hong Kong protests, and India's approach to Pakistan-related tensions (Gurieff & Treisman, 2022; Snyder, 2018).

The third subtype involves *moral panic manufacturing* — the deliberate amplification of culturally resonant social anxieties (crime, immigration, cultural change, moral decay) into collective crisis narratives that demand authoritarian responses (Cohen, 2002). Contemporary examples extensively documented in the corpus include anti-immigration moral panics in Hungary and Italy, anti-LGBTQ+ moral panics in Russia and Poland, and anti-elite cultural grievance frameworks in the United States and Brazil (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

In each case, the functional outcome is consistent: the manufactured or inflated crisis produces a collective emotional state of anxious rage that simultaneously delegitimizes existing governance arrangements and legitimates the superior authority that claims to offer protection and retribution.

4.5 Mechanism 5: Institutional Rage Normalization

The fifth and perhaps most insidious mechanism identified in the reviewed literature involves the gradual normalization of rage as an appropriate, even virtuous, mode of political engagement. Unlike the preceding mechanisms, which operate through episodic mobilization, institutional rage normalization is a long-term cultural project that reshapes the emotional norms governing political discourse.

Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of *emotional feeling rules* — socially sanctioned norms governing which emotions are appropriate in which contexts. Political systems have their own emotional feeling rules, and ruling regimes can deliberately reshape these rules to normalize rage and delegitimize moderate or conciliatory emotional stances. Leaders who perform public rage — who shout, insult, threaten, and demean — model a new emotional standard for political engagement, making rage appear not merely acceptable but admirable (Mishra, 2017).

Flam and King (2005) developed the concept of *emotional labor in politics*, analyzing how movements and regimes manage emotional climates to sustain mobilization. In authoritarian contexts, this involves rewarding rage-expressive behavior and penalizing emotional restraint, creating incentive structures that push political culture toward permanent emotional escalation. Applebaum (2020) documented this dynamic in Poland and Hungary, where ruling parties systematically dismantled the emotional norms of democratic deliberation and replaced them with a political culture that valorizes anger, contempt, and aggression.

Social media platforms have dramatically accelerated this normalization process. Studies demonstrate that users who receive positive social feedback (likes, shares, retweets) for anger-expressive posts are significantly more likely to produce emotionally escalatory content over time, creating a learned behavior cycle that progressively normalizes political rage (Brady et al., 2017; Rooduijn, 2019). When state-aligned actors see this positive feedback for rage-expressive content, they participate in a normalization process that extends far beyond direct propaganda.

5. The Rage-Legitimation Cycle: An Integrated Framework

Synthesizing findings across the five identified mechanisms, this paper proposes the **Rage-Legitimation Cycle (RLC)** as an integrated analytical framework for understanding how superior authorities cultivate public rage to legitimize ruling regimes. The RLC comprises six sequential but iterative stages.

Stage 1 — Grievance Identification: Ruling elites systematically scan the social landscape for existing grievances — economic anxieties, status insecurities, cultural dislocations — that carry high emotional charge and can be politically activated.

Stage 2 — Enemy Attribution: Identified grievances are attributed to a designated enemy — ethnic group, foreign power, domestic opposition, cultural elite — through rhetorical, media, and institutional channels, transforming diffuse frustration into directed anger.

Stage 3 — Emotional Priming: State-aligned media ecosystems, nationalist cultural institutions, and social media infrastructures prime public emotional responses through repeated exposure to threat narratives, humiliation frames, and revenge scripts.

Stage 4 — Crisis Activation: A triggering event — real, manufactured, or exaggerated — activates primed rage at sufficient intensity to produce visible public mobilization: demonstrations, online outrage cascades, electoral surges, or vigilante action.

Stage 5 — Regime Positioning: The ruling authority positions itself as the authentic representative and avenger of public rage, enacting symbolic or substantive "protective" measures that validate collective anger and justify state power expansion.

Stage 6 — Normalization and Repetition: Successful rage-legitimation episodes are institutionalized through emotional norm shifts, memorial practices, educational revision, and media landscape changes that lower the threshold for future rage activation and increase regime dependence on emotional governance.

This cycle is self-reinforcing: each successful iteration deepens the emotional dependency of legitimacy on managed rage, making peaceful de-escalation politically costly for the regime and increasing the structural requirement for continued enemy construction and crisis manufacture. The RLC thus describes not merely an episodic political strategy but a *structural trap* that gradually constrains regime options and accelerates toward political extremity.

6. Discussion

6.1 Implications for Political Legitimacy Theory

The RLC framework challenges rationalist accounts of political legitimacy by demonstrating that emotional governance constitutes a stable, reproducible, and self-reinforcing source of regime support. This finding extends Habermas's (1975) legitimation crisis thesis into the affective domain: states facing legitimation deficits in the rational-legal register do not simply collapse but pivot toward emotional legitimation strategies, with managed rage as the primary currency.

The implications are theoretically significant. If rage-legitimation constitutes a genuine legitimacy mechanism — producing genuine popular support rather than merely manufactured compliance — then Weberian typologies require revision to incorporate a fourth ideal type: *affective legitimacy*, rooted not in tradition, charisma, or legal procedure but in shared emotional experience and enemy identification. This extends Salmela and von Scheve's (2017) conceptual contribution by providing an integrated processual account of how affective legitimacy is produced and sustained.

6.2 Comparative Political Contexts

The reviewed literature demonstrates that rage-legitimation strategies operate across diverse regime types, though with important contextual variations. In consolidated authoritarian states

— Russia, China, Iran — the mechanisms operate primarily through direct media control and state institutional channels, producing relatively coordinated emotional mobilization (Guriev & Treisman, 2022; Huang, 2015). In competitive authoritarian and hybrid regimes — Hungary, Turkey, Venezuela, the Philippines — the mechanisms are more distributed, combining state media control with algorithmic social media exploitation and semi-autonomous nationalist movements (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Schedler, 2013).

In formally democratic contexts — India, Brazil, Poland, the United States — rage-legitimation operates through electoral and media competition, with populist leaders exploiting democratic freedoms to cultivate emotional constituencies that subsequently enable democratic backsliding (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). This cross-regime applicability suggests that the RLC describes a general political technology rather than a phenomenon confined to authoritarian systems.

6.3 The Role of Pre-existing Social Cleavages

A consistent finding across the corpus is that rage-legitimation strategies require social raw material — pre-existing grievances, identities, and conflicts — that can be exploited and amplified. Regimes do not create social divisions *ex nihilo*; they identify, exaggerate, and instrumentalize divisions that have genuine sociological roots (Berenschot, 2011; Varshney, 2002). This finding has important implications for counter-strategy: addressing the underlying social conditions that generate emotional precarity is as important as challenging the elite actors who exploit them.

6.4 Digital Media as Rage Amplification Infrastructure

Perhaps the most significant contemporary development documented in the corpus is the role of digital media platforms as involuntary or complicit partners in rage amplification. Algorithmic optimization for engagement creates structural incentives for emotionally escalatory content that authoritarian actors exploit without needing to directly control the platforms (Brady et al., 2017; Tucker et al., 2017). This represents a qualitative change in the political ecology of rage cultivation, dramatically reducing the cost and increasing the scalability of emotional governance strategies.

Platform accountability, algorithmic transparency, and regulatory frameworks that reduce outrage-optimized content amplification therefore constitute important structural interventions against rage-legitimation dynamics, complementing more direct anti-authoritarian political strategies.

6.5 Limitations of This Review

Several limitations require acknowledgment. First, the English-language bias of the search strategy may underrepresent scholarship on rage-legitimation in non-Anglophone regional contexts, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Future SLRs should incorporate multilingual search strategies. Second, the rapidly evolving digital media landscape means that studies published before 2020 may underestimate the role of algorithmic

amplification. Third, the observational and qualitative nature of much of the included literature limits causal inference; experimental and quasi-experimental designs are needed to establish causal mechanisms more rigorously. Fourth, the RLC framework proposed here is theoretically derived from synthesis rather than empirically tested; future research should subject the cycle to systematic empirical examination across multiple national contexts.

7. Conclusion

This Systematic Literature Review demonstrates that the cultivation of public rage constitutes a coherent, reproducible, and cross-contextually applicable strategy through which superior authorities legitimize ruling regimes. Drawing on 74 peer-reviewed studies spanning political science, sociology, communication studies, and political psychology, the review identifies five core mechanisms — enemy construction, media manipulation, nationalist emotional scripting, crisis manufacturing, and institutional rage normalization — and synthesizes them into the Rage-Legitimation Cycle (RLC) framework.

The RLC extends existing theoretical accounts of authoritarian legitimacy and emotional politics by providing an integrated processual model that captures both the episodic and structural dimensions of rage-based governance. Its central theoretical contribution is the conceptualization of affective legitimacy as a distinct and self-reinforcing mode of political authority that is increasingly dominant in an era of institutional distrust, digital media ecosystems, and economic precarity.

The practical implications are significant. Civil society organizations, independent media, platform regulators, and democratic governments must recognize manufactured rage not as a spontaneous byproduct of political conflict but as an engineered governing technology requiring systematic counter-strategies. These include emotional literacy education, algorithmic accountability regulation, support for independent media ecosystems, and — most fundamentally — the substantive redress of the underlying grievances that provide the emotional raw material for rage-legitimation strategies.

Authoritarian regimes that govern through cultivated rage face a structural dilemma: each successful iteration of the RLC increases their dependence on emotional escalation, raising the political cost of de-escalation and progressively narrowing their governance options. Understanding this dynamic is the essential first step toward dismantling it.

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