

Motive International's
Social Contract Assessment Tool (SCAT):

I. Introduction & Background:

At the foundation of nearly any governance system (i.e. “a system of authority”) whether state or non-state, is the concept of a **social contract**. A social contract is the mutually agreed, often unspoken “pact” between the **governing** (leaders) and **governed** (followers) about how a group of people organize authority and rules. Terms of a social contract are defined by the expectations of each party. Let’s define what we mean by the two actors involved in a social contract:

“The Governed” are people willing to grant special power and responsibility to authority figures in exchange for a commitment from those authorities to meet specific expectations.

“The Governing” are the people who have been granted special power and responsibility in exchange for meeting the expectations of those over whom they wield authority.

Like any contract, the strength of a social contract is determined by how well each party meets the expectations of the other. Stable governance exists when the governed meet the expectations of the governing, and vice versa. It is critical to remember that *both* parties in a social contract have power and rely on the other to exist. Without followers, there are no leaders. Without citizens, there are no state officials. Without employees, there are no bosses. The governed need the governing and vice versa. Regardless of what outsiders think, it is the parties who have “opted in” to a particular social contract (governance system) that determine the legitimacy of the other.

Layers of Governance

The concept of social contracts can be applied to state systems of governance (i.e. national or sub-national governments), or non-state governance systems (i.e. tribal, religious, civil, corporate, etc.). State, non-state, global, civil, religious, tribal, and other governance systems simultaneously exist in layers for all people in the world. Let’s consider a few examples of governance systems and who the actors might be in them:

Governance System	Examples of The Governed	Examples of The Governing
Government (national)	Citizens of a Country	Officers of the central government
Non-State	Residents of a neighborhood	Police or Vigilante Groups
Civic	Families/staff at a school	Parent Teacher Association
Civic	Households in a neighborhood	Vigilantes/neighborhood watch members
Religious	Followers of a faith	Clergy or Vestries
Ethnic	Pastoralists or Villagers	A council of leaders or a chief
Corporate	CEO & Employees	Board Members
Criminal	Members or supporters	Gang or militant leaders
Family	Members of a family	Head(s) of household

The governance systems that exist in a particular time or place or among particular individuals may co-exist harmoniously, exist with friction, or be intensely contested. For example, an individual may be part of a minority religious group that inherently has its own set of rules and authorities (i.e. a religious governance system) but is also a citizen of a country whose government (i.e. a state governance system) outlaws that religion. This would be an example of two governance systems existing in competition for a given individual.

II. Elements of Social Contracts:

There is no universal way to understand the elements that go into forming and maintaining a social contract, but the following framework presents three categories or “**sources of legitimacy**” that can be found in all social contracts or governance systems, regardless of type.

Services/Performance

The first source of legitimacy deals with the resources or support the governing *provides* or *does* (i.e. “services”) for the benefit of the governed, and what the governing must do (i.e. how they must *perform*) to be “eligible” for services according to the governing. We call this category “**Services/Performance.**” Services/Performance can be thought of as the “*what*” of governance, because it captures what those who opt into a governance system get out of it in return.

Examples: A U.S. citizen is expected to pay taxes (performance) to be entitled to public roads, schools, etc. (services). A Catholic is expected to go to confession (performance) to receive the rite of forgiveness (service). A boss is expected to pay wages (service) in exchange for labor (performance).

Process of Exchange

The second source of legitimacy deals with interaction, specifically the mechanisms by which the governed and governing exchange information, ideas, and convey their expectations to one another. We call this category “**Process of Exchange.**” A process of exchange can be thought of as the “*how*” of governance, because it’s how leaders and followers interact.

Examples: An annual shareholder meeting for a corporation enables shareholders to interact with a board of directors and receive information on the company’s activities. A national election allows voters to express their opinion to a government on who should have power. An activist group engages in a letter writing campaign to get a big company to change its policies. A religious leader broadcasts sermons on the radio as a way to convey ideas to followers.

Shared Values

The third and most important source of legitimacy deals with identity and interests. It’s the idea that followers choose to give authority to leaders with whom they have something in common, because people who share identity in some way tend to share interests. We call this category “**Shared Values.**” Shared values can be thought of as the “*why*” of governance, because it defines the basic reasons why people “opt in” to a governance system. Shared values are the foundation that shapes the above two elements of social contracts because leaders who share values with their followers tend to establish *processes of exchange* and provide *services* that reflect the values of their followers. Sharing values also creates the basis of common understanding upon which rules and norms can be agreed between leaders and followers.

Examples: A soccer coach (the leader) and players (followers) choose to be a team because they both share an interest in winning games. They both *value* winning. American citizens tend to embrace the values of prosperity, liberty, and security, so they tend to vote for politicians who value these things. (It would be surprising if a candidate won an elected position in the U.S. based on the idea that poverty brings one closer to God, or the notion that strict laws should govern all aspects of private life, since these are not widely *shared values* among American voters.)

Services/Performance	Process of Exchange	Shared Values
<p>The governed expect that the governing will provide or perform certain services. Types and expectations on service delivery vary hugely from one society to another. Depending on the society, expected services might be any of the following: delivering water or trash services, running schools and hospitals, issuing ID cards and official documents, issuing currency (i.e. money) that can be used to acquire goods, providing security, or distributing hunted game meat fairly among tribal households. What matters for stable governance is that the governed believe <i>what</i> they receive from the governing is worth granting those leaders power and authority. Simultaneously, the governing do <i>what</i> is expected of them to keep their mandate to lead from the governed.</p>	<p>The governed and governing must have mechanisms for exchanging information, ideas, and even power or resources between them. What matters for stable governance is only that both parties agree on the type and process of exchange. A process of exchange could include everything from elections (an example of the governed giving their opinion on who should govern), to town hall meetings (an opportunity for the governed and governing to interact), to radio broadcasts (that allow a leader to transmit info to followers). A homeowner’s association (HOA) might establish a monthly newsletter so the HOA board (the governing) can distribute information about community rules or events to homeowners (the governed). What matters for stable governance is that both parties feel satisfied with <i>how</i> they interact.</p>	<p>The governed must believe that the governing (those to whom they give power) have some degree in common with them. Shared values could mean the governing have similar “identity markers” as the governed, for example language or ethnicity. Or shared values could be reflected in mutual ideology between the governed and governing, such as valuing collective over individual interest (or vice versa), or valuing diversity, or freedom, or wealth, etc. Shared values help ensure both sides have a mutual foundation of <i>interests</i> on which rules can be agreed. Values differ in all societies. What matters for stable governance is that the governed feel those in power (the governing) share enough values with them that they will govern legitimately, thus explaining <i>why</i> the governed are willing to grant power and submit to the rules of the governing.</p>

Evaluating the degree to which the governed and governing meet the others’ expectations in each source of legitimacy above is a useful way to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a governance system. When expectations of both parties are met, governance is likely to be strong and stable. The governed are likely to view the governing as “legitimate” leaders, just as the governing are likely to view the governed as “legitimate” followers, members, citizens, etc. Remember, legitimacy is a **two-way street**. Leaders and followers must *both* meet the expectations of the other for a social contract to form and “stick.” Stable governance requires expectations by both parties to be reasonably met, **or to be adjusted or re-negotiated accordingly**.

If the **governing** fall significantly short of meeting the expectations of the governed their legitimacy may be low and their authority could be at risk. Mistrust, criticism, or removal of those in power may be possible in this situation unless expectations across the three categories are re-negotiated. A good example of this might be an elected official losing re-election to an opponent who offers more favorable “terms” in the social contract.

On the flip side of the equation, if the **governed** fall significantly short of meeting the expectations of the governing, the governing might punish or marginalize those they govern. An example of this might be a government cutting off services to tax evaders. A more extreme example might be a leader calling for the execution of people who do not adhere to strictly-defined values.

III. The Social Contract Assessment Tool (SCAT):

Motive developed the Social Contract Assessment Tool (SCAT) to assess and depict governance systems in support of analysis, planning, targeting, and assessments. The SCAT features questions that form lines of inquiry to collect and organize data, and a graphic depiction template to represent data findings.

SCAT Lines of Inquiry

At its core, the SCAT is a series of questions or “lines of inquiry” aligned to the three sources of legitimacy, designed to gather data from people in any given governance system. The SCAT’s carefully crafted questions follow a deliberate form and structure. The first question in each category assesses followers’ expectations of leaders. The second assesses leader’s expectations of followers. The third assesses how well leaders are meeting expectations, and the fourth assesses how well followers are meeting expectations. SCAT questions are phrased to be **non-normative** but are designed to yield **normative** perspectives from the people in the governance system. Bias is minimized through open-ended (non-leading) questions. Answers to each question can be gathered through interviews, group discussions, or by reviewing data sources such as articles, public statements or actions of leaders and followers in a given governance system. SCAT questions below can be used as shown below, or tweaked for cultural or linguistic appropriateness, while adhering to the form and structure explained.

Services/Performance

1. What support/things of value are provided by leaders that no one else can provide?
2. What must one do to be “eligible” to get support/things of value from leaders?
3. How well are leaders providing what’s expected?
4. How well are followers doing what they must to be eligible?

Process of Exchange

1. How should leaders share info/ideas with followers? (Describe specific times, places, mechanisms)
2. How should followers express ideas/opinions/issues to leaders?
3. How well are leaders using mechanisms as agreed?
4. How well are followers using mechanisms as agreed?

Shared Values

1. What are the top beliefs, values, traits leaders should have to make people want to follow them?
2. What are the top beliefs, values, traits that followers should have according to leaders?
3. How well do leaders fit this description?
4. How well do followers fit this description?

SCAT Depiction Template

The SCAT template offers a simple way to capture data and findings based on the lines of inquiry above in a consistent, organized manner that convey meaning and can help inform planning and decisions. In its simplest form, the SCAT depiction template, which depicts one governance system, looks like this:

