

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN  
POWER AND AUTHORITY IN POLITICS**

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*BY*

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE  
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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried out under my supervision by Akinbobola, Olasunkanmi Akin, in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba – Akoko, Ondo State.

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## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty who has been my help from the conception of my course in this citadel of learning till now.



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## INTRODUCTION

The concepts of power and authority constitute one of the most discussed topics in the realm of political philosophy. Scholars have however found it difficult to draw the line between power and authority. This problem emanated from the fact that scholars seemed to have taken these concepts as twin concepts that may be used interchangeably.

The aim of this research is to examine the distinction that has been drawn between power and authority and examine that the former is sociological while the latter is philosophical. The essay shall argue that power can become authority when backed up with justification while authority may take on the position of power while its justification element is removed.

Many scholars have defined power in various ways. Russell posited that power was the production of intended effect while Max Weber defined power as the capacity to make binding decision that has far reaching consequence on the society.

Thus, this exercise of power in society always reduces the area of choice left open to individuals. It is however important to note that government is charged by its citizens with the responsibility of protecting its territory against foreign predators and ensuring domestic tranquility. Therefore, the state requires effective power to maintain and control its citizenry so as to guarantee peace and safety amongst them.



However, authority in contrast has been defined as a quality of one person, not in the sense that he has properly or physical qualities, but as an impersonal relation in which one person looks upon another as somebody superior to him. Authority is the basis for initiating influence or control over personnel policies or materials in an organization. This is the sense in which people demand for the authority behind an action. When there is a basis for authority, action taken are said to be legitimate. Thus, based on the above definition of power and authority it is no more problematic bringing out the distinctions between these two concepts.

The statement of the problem arises from the fact that authority and power are different concepts which this essay intends to clarify.

This essay will be limited in scope in comparison between power and authority.

It is the thesis of this essay that a water tight distinction cannot be made between power and authority. However, this does not mean that there are no differences between the two concepts. There is then no contradiction if we claim that 'authority' could be distinguished from 'power' in that the right of exercise political power may not be recognized, but political authority is always backed up with formal rules.

For the sources of this research, material will be sourced from Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko library, state and National Library Akure.



This research is analytic in nature. The analytical nature of the work called for the adoption of both critical and analytical methods of philosophical investigation to unravel the difficulties attached to the concept under discuss.

In light of this, Chapter One shall examine power as posited by different scientists, Marxist and corporatist concepts of power.

Chapter Two will focus attention on authority as one of the basic ingredients in the study of politics as posited by political scholars and some philosophers.

Effort shall also be made to examine Max Weber's classification of authority. What the *de jure* and *de facto* authorities are all about shall also be examined.

Chapter Three of this essay shall concentration on the distinctions between power and authority and to show the senses at which they can be used interchangeably and independently of one another.

The concluding part of the essay shall be an appraisal of how the concepts of power and authority functions in political discourse.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Objectives of the Power Theory

The concept of power constitutes one of the most discussed topics in the realm of social and political philosophy. Power in the ordinary language means "ability". To say that someone has power means that he/she is able. It is because of this meaning of power as ability that we can use the same word for power of a dynamo or will power. But when we speak of power in the social, political sense, we are referring to a specific kind of ability, the ability to make other people to do what we want them to do.

According to Bertrand Russell:

*Power is the production of intended effect. Power relationship is a type of causal relationship in which one person or a group of persons can bring out certain actions from other individuals in order that the determinants of these actions are such thing as threat, sanction, propaganda and coercion<sup>1</sup>.*

In this case, however, for a fuller understanding, we have to elucidate the most intimate relations of power to force on the one hand and to violence on the other. Just as for Foucault war can be regarded as force-relations laid bare, so I would proposed that physical force, including its most compressed societal form of war, represents power relations laid bare and one of their main roots (issuing in the power of life and death). On violence, some people considers violence as failure of beneficent power and the other, more realistically, as central to morally neutral power, they use violence.

Mills encapsulates this by stating:

*All politics is a struggle for power; and the ultimate kind of power is violence'. Thus, the exercise of power in society always reduces the area of choice left opened for individuals<sup>2</sup>.*

It is important to note that government is charged by its citizens with the responsibility of protecting its territory against foreign predators and ensuring domestic tranquility.

In order for the government to do this, the state requires effective power to control its citizenries so as to guarantee peace and stability in the society. The government, especially in a democracy derives its power from the individuals, and the individual derive certain rights from other.

Thus political power has been defined by Robert E. Norris as:

*The ability to win friends and influence people. The most famous view on power is from Lord Acton. According to him, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Power is said to be corrupt because of the abuse and coercive use of political power. Apparently, there is personal satisfaction connected with personal power, possibly more in achieving it than in wielding it<sup>3</sup>.*

Personal power has been defined by Stuart Brown as:

*The ability to control, sway or influence others. In the Bible, personal power was first manifested by human, when Cain killed his brother. Cain undoubtedly was the more powerful. His act marks the beginning of long history of individual and collective violence with intent to attain power. Very early in history fear became intimately associated with power. Just as weak animals cower from fear of the more powerful. Many humans fear the power of others<sup>4</sup>.*

From time immemorial, up to the present, leaders were chosen on the basis of their physical prowess or strength. In fact, they did not have to be chosen; they won the right to lead by subduing all challengers. Even in highly developed and democratic societies size and strength are often associated with positions of leadership, money for instance, is a means to secure power. In every society the rich person enjoys more personal power than the poor. This is explored by the fact of the intimate connection between money and power.

Hobbes is fully apprised of the importance of power, argues that:

*It essential to distinguish between power and dominion. He says that a captive or a slave is in his master's power, but is not thereby a subject, as is a citizen or a servant. A subject is one who acknowledges that his master has the right, not just the power, to issue orders, and that he himself is obliged, not just compelled, to obey. A captive or a slave, works under a contract of service and is thereby obliged to do his master's will even when he is not being watched.*

Still, one man can have power over another even without resorting to violence of force. An employer may have the right (authority) to dismiss an employee who will not do the work required of him. As a matter of fact, doing this may give, him considerable power he would be doing to his employer by dismissing him. But if the employer can readily obtain a good job somewhere else, little harm is done to him by being dismissed. That being so his employer's power over him in virtue of being able to threaten the sanction of dismissal is much reduced.



It is not always necessary, however, to appeal to state arbitration for the settlement of disagreements. Consider an industrial dispute about wages. Employers and employees may be able to reach agreement among themselves through discussion. If they cannot reach agreement among themselves through discussion, if they cannot reach agreement, then they may either resort to the use of such coercive power as the law allows, a strike on the one hand and a threat of dismissal on the other, or they may choose the method of arbitration agreeing to accept the decision of an arbitration tribunal as authoritative.

Hobbes argues further that:

*When social political philosopher talks of a 'power of elite' in a political community they mean that over a given range of issues a particular group which are identified by some set of observable and empirical characteristic will dominates. The question of whether the groups decisions are right or not is not relevant to the question of whether the groups is able to get its way. It is however important to note that discussions about power suggest a sociological concept in which observation is highly relevant<sup>6</sup>.*

Much of the work of political sociologists has been addressed to the matter of power and influence and of who holds these rather important commodities in both new old societies. There has, however, been considerably more headway in the effort to lay out a compelling theoretical portrait than there has been in the hard research required by this subject.

It is important to discuss different ways by which power could be attained. A man or woman may be able to get others to do what he/she wants

because he/she is eloquent or because they trust him/her on his wisdom or sound. Judgment or because he/she holds a special office or because he has the strength to make things unpleasant for people if they refuse.

These senses of power are associated with coercion and this is prominent in situations of conflict. Coercion is the use of superior force to make others do what you want them to do when they are unwilling.

The word 'power' comes to be associated with enforcement:

*However, on this meaning we can still differentiate between two forms of power "Naked Power" is the ability to have one's order carried out irrespective of one's position in law. The power of an armed robber is an example of such a power. The second is that of "Legitimate Power" which derives from the office of a person issuing the order. This means that his power is the exercise of authority in the sense of having the right to be obeyed because of the virtue of his position to get other to do what he tells them to do or by the virtue of one's position in law. This is how the word "Power" has come to be used to mean authority<sup>7</sup>.*

Political power has been broadly defined by Karl Marx as:

*The capacity to affect another's behaviour by some form of sanctions, may take the form of coercion or inducement; power may be backed by the carrot or stick and it may as well be exercised in a positive or negative fashion<sup>8</sup>.*

Conventional thinking would have us believe that those who wield power in a society must be those who occupy the principal offices of the political arena the heads of government and the leaders of political parties, among others political sociology, however, does not adopt this conventional

view either of politics or of power; it makes both the source and the exercise of power into a problem rather than a definition.

Marx argues further that:

*Power may not necessarily be held by those whom we think hold it in modern societies, that is, the politicians. Other scholars continue the study of power inspired by the same sort of critical stance toward society. Political leaders may acquire compliance with their wishes by promising wealth or honours to their supporters, or they may threaten to deny such rewards to their opponents. Most exercise of political power includes both elements. The penalties for non obedience of the holder of power may be extreme, such as imprisonment or even death<sup>9</sup>.*

These penalties are usually in the hands of those who control the institution of the state usually wielding the greatest political power. However, it is the fear of these coercive sanctions which promotes obedience, not the coercion itself. Indeed, too frequent use of the coercive apparatus of the law may be an indication of the weakness of political power.

Having discussed what political power implies and different ways in which it could be attained, it is important to discuss the idea of the distribution of power as put forward by different political philosopher. It must be posited that political power is not evenly distributed in any political system. The rich as earlier observed possessed more political resources than the poor, the former can finance election campaigns, bribe supporters and purchase other political advantages such as a good education, and the rich may be individual or may be corporate bodies.



Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century employed an argument to the effect that:

*Power alone is not sufficient to substantiate political authority, or, as he put it, to constitute 'dominion', Hobbes is often supposed to have held a power theory of sovereignty, but it seems to me that the main point of his theory is that both power and the acknowledgement of authority are necessary. Hobbes does take the view that the dominion of God is constituted by power alone; or at least he does so in some of his remarks about God. Although, Hobbes is fully apprised of the importance of power, he thinks it is essential to distinguish between power and authority'<sup>10</sup>.*

The elitist conception of power is manifested where the societies is divided into two groups, the rulers and the ruled. The smaller groups, the political elite control the majority.

Mosca, an early twentieth century originator of modern elite theories postulated that:

*In all societies two classes of people appear a class that rules and a class that is ruled". The first class always the less numerous performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, where as the second the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first'<sup>11</sup>.*

### **1.1 The Pluralist Conception of Power**

Power in liberal democracies is widely distributed given the fact that there is continual competition between groups and that new groups constantly emerge. Decisions are seen as the outcome of bargaining between



influential groups and although political power is not evenly distributed, no one group has a monopoly of power.

Membership of the groups over all consensus on the aims of the political system and the method for maintaining political stability. The resolution of conflict tends to be non-violent taking the form of bargaining and procedural devices such as election.

## 1.2 The Marxist Conception of Power

The Marxist conception of power relates to the view that economic order of society determines how political power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling class as a consequence of the concentration of economic power in the hands of few. The state is a coercive mechanism designed to keep the ruling class in power. Marxism recognizes divisions within the ruling class and as a result of these divisions the state has a degree of autonomy and regulates political and economic conflicts, moreover, in order to maintain the stability of the ruling class the state will attempt to mitigate the worst consequences of the division of political power, and to appraise those who may seek to disturb the *Status quo*<sup>12</sup>.

This conception made Marx to conceive the ruling class as:

*The bourgeoisie, were the owners of the means of production associated with this system of capital accumulation and commodity production. It did not matter whether they had been far-sighted landowners, former artisans or merchants in Feudal society. What is crucial for Marxists is the belief that their ownership of the new and increasingly*

*predominant mode of production led them to have common interests and goals*<sup>13</sup>.

These interests of defending and sustaining the capitalist mode of production led them to act collectively against both the landowning ruling class and the new working class (proletariat) of landless factory workers created by this profound change.

### **1.3 The Corporatist Conception of Power**

The corporatist conception of power is the most recent of the investigation of where power lies, modern corporatism emerged in the 1970s to analyze power distribution in the contemporary liberal democratic state of certain groups in society into the decision making process, the state benefits from the co-operation and expertise of groups such as industrialists and trade unions in the implementation of political decisions, while the groups gain from a share in political power and the recognition of their power and the recognition of their monopoly as representatives of certain societal sectors.

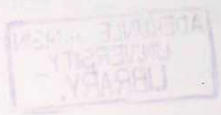
As a result of the involvement of some key groups, these large areas of decision making process are depoliticized. Corporatism implies that the state is not as the Marxist claims, a repressive means or coercion but a means of engineering consent<sup>14</sup>.

Having discussed all the above views on power, as one of the basic and key concept in the study of politics, the next chapter shall attempt to discuss "authority" and see how authority is related to power in politics.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### The Concept of Authority

Social theorists and political philosophers have expressed varied views and opinions on what the concept of "authority" is all about.

According to Erich Fromm:

*Authority is not a quality one person has in the sense that he/she has property or physical qualities. Authority refers to an impersonal relation in which one person looks upon another as somebody superior to him/her<sup>1</sup>.*

The definition seems to explain the type of relationship that exists between a senior and junior officer in an organization or government establishment.

In the view of David Robertson:

*Authority basically means the right to give an order, such that the command will be obeyed with no question as to that right or if not order, the right in some way nonetheless to evoke legitimate power in the support of a decision. In political sense authority is being in position to give and order that will be obeyed because it is seen as legitimate by those to whom the order is addressed, rather than being a command which is backed up by coercion<sup>2</sup>.*

Fromm argues further that:

*A person or a group of people is referred to as an authority when such a group of persons have a right to from out political decisions and affecting our political behaviour. Authority is often described as power exercised with general approval, that is, a legitimate power or the approved use of force<sup>3</sup>.*

Thus in situations when commands must be given and obeyed, there must be somebody who should enjoy the obedience of his followers too by the same laid-down rules and regulations. But we raise the question: What makes such an acknowledgement of authority right? Answering this question

L. P. Baradat opines that:

*Under individualism, all people were essentially equal, if this were so; no one had a greater right to rule than another. Yet society needed governors to maintain order, and these were chosen by the community as a whole. Hence, the power to govern came from the people; the people were the source of legal and political authority.*<sup>4</sup>

Also, Thomas Hobbes has tried to provide answer to why we need the concept of sovereignty authority. He posited that:

*In the absence of a supreme authority, there will be chaos if two powers or bodies of persons, each claiming authority disagree there is no way to resolve the disagreement except by setting up a supreme authority to decide dispute. This is why a final arbiter of disputes is needed if they are not to be settled by fighting.*<sup>5</sup>

From all that has been said about authority as a basic concept in the study of politics, we can infer that what makes an authority, legitimate is the willingness of the people to accept the orders of the person laying claim to authority either the *de jure* or *de-facto* sense the necessary recognition. This authority in its political sense seems to refer to the formal or legal relationship between policy maker and citizens. Hence the policy maker enjoys the right to make pronouncement that will be binding on the citizenry.

To refer to someone as being 'in authority' is to say that the subject has been authorized to give orders and has a right to be obeyed. The parent, teachers and policemen could be put under this category. However, to talk of someone as 'an authority' such a person is entitled to obedience not because of whom he or she is but because of some special skill or knowledge of particular matter. Karl W. Deutsch explained further that:

*Authority means first of all the credibility of source of communication. Its message will be believed almost regardless of their content. If a scholar has become an authority his view will be believed even when the evidence for them is weak<sup>6</sup>.*

It is therefore, the content of what he/she says that determines his/her authority. When we say that Mr./Mrs. X is 'an authority' in philosophy we are saying in effect that we shall listen to him/her and obey his/her directives on most aspects of knowledge of philosophy. Thus however, is not because of any laid down rules, but because of his recognized competence and his knowledge about the discipline in question.

Whenever authority is effectively exercised, the person in authority processes power. He / she is able to make other people do as he/she requires. It is to be noted that the power to make other people do what you required may depend on the fact that you hold a special office, in virtue of holding that office you have the authority to make certain requirements of other people, and they do what you require because they acknowledge your authority. Your authority and their acceptance of it are what give you the



power to make them do what you required them to do. We can therefore think of authority as being one species of power. It was therefore not surprising that the word 'power' has been used interchangeably with authority<sup>7</sup>.

Authority is the right or the capacity or both, to have proposals or prescriptions or instructions accepted without recourse to persuasion, bargaining, or force systems of rules, including legal systems, typically entitle particular office bearers to make decisions or issue instructing such office bearers have authority conferred on them by the rules and the practices which constitute the relevant activity, umpires and referees for example; have authority under the rules and practices that define the games they refer constitutive of most sporting contests, law enforcement office, are authorized to issue instructions, but they also, receive the right to have in ways which would not be acceptable in the absence of authorization, for example, to search persons or premises.<sup>8</sup> To have authority in these ways is to be the bearer of an office and a set of rules. In itself, this says nothing about the capacity in fact of such an office-holder without introducing persuasion, bargaining, or force. A referee, for example, may possess authority under the rules of the game, but in fact he / she would be challenged or ignored by the players. A distinction is therefore drawn between *de jure* authority in which a right to behave in particular ways may be appealed to and *de facto* authority in which there is practical success<sup>9</sup>.



A different distinction is drawn between a person who is in authority as an office-bearer and a person who is an authority on subject. The latter typically has special knowledge or special access to information not available to those who accept the person's status as an authority. For example, the speaker of the commons possesses authority (to regulate the business of the house under its rules of proceeding) and is also an authority (on its rules of procedure). Attempts have been made to find common features between those two usages. These focus primarily on the 'internal' relationship between the authority-holder and the authority-subject, the process of recognition of the status involved, and on the willingness of the authority subject to adopt the judgment of the authority holder (instead of his or her own, or in the absence of the ability to formulate one).

However, at this point it is important to mention that discussions on the concept of authority in modern terms were made by many thinkers, especially Marx Weber. In the following paragraphs, we shall examine Weber's distinction about authority. Max Weber divided authority into three parts namely, traditional, charismatic and rational-lega<sup>10</sup>.

## **2.2 The Traditional Authority**

This is the most universal and primitive case being one which rests on an established belief in the society of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them. The exercise of authority under institution of Kingship illustrates this. One

problem with this type of authority is that not the very best person in the society is put in authority. The sole determinate of this authority is having the royal blood. The exercise of traditional authority is not in isolation. It is supplemented by the use of rules which make the exercise of traditional authority legal. For example, a king in Yoruba land is both a political, religious and judicial officer<sup>11</sup>.

### **2.3 Rational-Legal Authority**

This is the second type of Weber's classification. Here, there is a claim to legitimacy which rests on the belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules to issue commands. The exercise of legal authority by an elected office holder explains this. There is a laid-down rule guiding his exercise of authority<sup>12</sup>.

### **2.4 Charismatic Authority**

This is the third of Weber's classification obedient is secured because of the special qualities identified by the people. Such qualities might include act of heroism, gift of oratory, ability to make things happen out of the ordinary performing miracles and other dramatic feats<sup>13</sup>.

We could observe from the foregoing analysis that in the case of traditional and rational-legal authority the emphasis is on rules where as in third type called 'charismatic' the account is on personal qualities.

Some writers on social theory have supposed that the third of these is authority. In a different sense from that of the first and second, that it is a

power or ability to command obedience, while the other two types are examples of a right to command.

Weber is describing different sources of authority, not different senses or meanings of the word. In each of the three types the person exercising authority is thought to have the right to issue commands, edicts, or precepts, and the right to be obeyed, but the right arises from different grounds. With rational-legal authority the right comes from a set of rules that explicitly defined right and duties<sup>14</sup>. With traditional authority, it comes from a set of rules, but this time the rules are 'coercive', not 'enacted'. that is to say, they have not been deliberately formulated as being desirable or necessary, but have grown up gradually over a period of time in which a customary practice, what is usually done, has hardened into a normative rule, that is what ought to be done. With charismatic authority, the right comes from the idea either that the leader's special qualities make him/her fitted to lead, or that they are a sign that he/she has been authorized by a supernatural being who is already credited with the right to command and to depute this right to vice-gerents on earth. A person who is thought to possess this kind of authority has the power or ability to command obedience only because his/her followers think he/she has the right to it.

It has to be noted that political authority is not of pure type but a mixture. For instance, in Cuba where Fidel Castro exercises charismatic authority rational/legal authority is also present.



A further analysis would reveal that these classifications are each subjected to the problems identified below, for the traditional authority hereditary succession is a common practice. This practice often leads to abuse of power, acute corruption and weak rule. In the case of rational-legal authority, abuse of power cannot be ruled out since in most cases incompetent people are rigged into office particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. The charismatic leader must necessarily have chains of successes being him / her if he/she is to be successful. The major problem with this type of authority is that it may not be possible for the citizens to know when they are being misled.

It is important to note that the analysis of authority made by Marx Weber seems to be the same with the distinction that is often made between *de facto* and *de-jure* authority<sup>15</sup>. The *de-facto* sense of authority is based on the recognition of another person as having an entitlement to command. This recognition enables the person to effectively issue commands and have such commands obeyed, such recognition is not to say that the people to which the command is directed cannot disobey, for instance at a chaotic traffic scene, somebody comes out to direct the traffic (though neither a policeman nor a traffic warden) and yet the people may obey.

This sense of authority is different from power since the agent is not using any force to secure obedience. the people may refuse without any unpleasant consequences.



Political authority is usually based on such set of rules which provides for certain set of bodies or institutions who then command by appeal to those rules. A person is in authority in the *de jure* sense when a set of rules gives him the right to issue orders and the same set of rules constitute for others the duty to obey. It is this *de-jure* authority that in practice and which seems to be in conflict with the autonomy of the individual person.

In the first chapter of this essay, we have discussed cortically the meaning of power. In this chapter we discussed authority. Now can we say that there is a distinction between these two concepts, or is it the case this they are the same and can be used interchangeably? Thus, chapter three shall be devoted to a critical examination of the distinctions between these underlying concepts in the study of politics<sup>16</sup>.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### Critical Examination of the Distinctions between Power and Authority in Politics

Thus far, the concept of power has been discussed in chapter one and the concept of authority in Chapter Two. The intention in this chapter shall be to examine the distinctions between these concepts as basic and fundamental to the study and fundamental to the study and understanding of politics in our contemporary societies.

In ordinary language and thought, power and authority are often used interchangeably. But an analysis of the two concepts reveals that such identification is grossly inadequate, at least from a philosophical point of view. Hence, different political theorists have tended to explain the distinctions between power and authority<sup>1</sup>.

Norman P. Barry is of the view that:

*Normally, people want to describe authority relationship in terms of "legitimacy" and power relationship in terms of causal factor that enable one person or group of persons to determine the actions of other<sup>2</sup>.*

Making a distinction between power and authority for the purpose of analytical rigour was that promoted Barry to make further distinction.

Barry further asserts that:

*To elucidate the distinction between authority and power it might be to saying that authority in a philosophical concept, while power is a sociological concept. This is to say that to ask questions about somebody in authority is to ask*



*normative questions about the right of that person to give orders and decisions under a given set of rules. But a question about power in the society is purely sociological in which observation is highly relevant. The above distinction made by Barry had earlier been made by David Hume when he posited that philosophy is normative while sociology is descriptive<sup>3</sup>.*

It is important to be clear about the distinction between power and authority, since they are often confused, in language as well as in thought. We speak of a statute giving a minister 'power' to do this or that, when we mean giving him authority. Similarly we speak of going beyond one's 'legal powers' or acting 'ultravires' where again the word 'authority' would express our meaning more clearly. The looseness of usage appears right at the beginning of the theoretical discussion of sovereignty, in the work of Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century.

Bodin writes:

*Sovereignty is the absolute and perpetual power of a state ... that is to say the supreme power to command. It is here necessary to formulate the definition of sovereignty, because there is no jurist or political philosopher who has defined it, although it is the principal feature and the one most necessary to be understood in the treatment of the state<sup>4</sup>.*

He goes on to speak further of sovereignty and so gives the impression that sovereignty is a matter of power in the ordinary sense of the word.

Now, anybody has the power or ability to issue a command, but not every one is authorized or entitled to do so in particular circumstances and not everyone is either able or entitled to have his commands carried out.

Does Bodin mean by 'absolute power' the ability to issue effective commands, i.e. the ability to have one's commands carried out?

This would be power, properly speaking or does he mean the entitlement or right to issue commands and to have them obeyed? This would be authority. A reading of the whole of his account of sovereignty makes it clear that he means the second, but his use of the expression 'absolute' power suggests that first<sup>5</sup>.

The most general meaning of 'power' is simply ability. This may be seen from the French term 'pouvoir' and the latin 'potestas' both of which are derived from the verb 'to be able'. It is because of this general meaning of 'power' that we can use the same word for the power of a dynamo, will power, or political power. Let us call this meaning of the word, sense (1) when we speak of power in a social context, however, we are usually thinking of a specific kind of ability, the ability to control somebody even when he/she is unwilling. "Authority may be acknowledged on other ground, such as hereditary succession or general consent (this last without any thought, because it may not be true, that the consent of a majority means the support of their power if it comes to a fight). And although the control of coercive power will often cause people to acknowledge a claim to authority, it does not always do so, if the power is exercised in a thoroughly brutal and unjust way, many of the people within the country may refuse to acknowledge the claim to authority, preferring resistance to submission even

though the chances of successful resistance are slight<sup>6</sup>. Other states similarly will tend to refuse *de jure* recognition to the new regime even though they may allow that *de facto* it has effective control.

It remains true nevertheless that the kind of authority which the state exerts cannot be exercised without some use of coercive power and without the ever-present possibility of falling back on enforcement when need arises. If men or women could be trusted always to act on decision reached as among the Quakers, by finding 'the sense of the meeting' the exercise of power would not be necessary.

Marx argues that:

*Eventually the state will 'wither away', i.e. that when men or women reach the stage of always guiding their action by reference to the common good, they will agree of their own accord and will not need to be compelled. In a religious community, and often in a well-conducted family, authority, whether, it be the authority of one person or that of majority opinion, can be acknowledge and followed without the backing of power to enforce it. But in the general affairs of society this is not so, and therefore the state needs to possess coercive power to back up its authority<sup>7</sup>.*

The authority of the states is of course the authority of law, and the laws of the state, as I said earlier differ from the rules of other associations and communities both by depending on force and by having sovereign authority. Force or coercive power is essential for law as well as for other aspects of politics, but the sovereignty of the state is an attribute of the



authority of state law, not an attribute of the force or power that the state must wield in order to make its system of law or its policies effective.

When we speak of power in a social context, however, we are usually thinking of a specific kind of ability, the ability to make other people do, what they want to do power may depend on different things. A man or woman may be able to get others to do what he or she wants, because he or she has the gift of the gab, or because they trust him or her for his or her wisdom or his or her integrity, or because he has the strength to make things unpleasant for them if they refuse. All four of these reasons have a place in the exercise of political power, but the least of the four is especially prominent in situation of conflict. This last is coercive power, using the threat of superior force to make others do what you want them to do when they are unwilling. Coercive power is not prominent in political conflict, the work 'power' which at first simply meant ability of any kind, comes to acquire associations with enforcement. Power can be used either without or with associations of enforcement. Furthermore, one of the grounds is the fact that the person with power holds a special office. This means that he has authority, and is able in virtue of that position to get others to do what he tells them to do, his power is the exercise of authority.<sup>8</sup> That is why the word 'power' can be used to mean authority.



For the distinction made by Hume:

*It is pertinent to say that, Discussions about authority boils down to the right and legality of somebody laying claim to authority. This is a situation where such order is forced on somebody by coercion or threat for him to do what he might not want to do. Authority in contrast is when an order is issued out with expectation of obedience to whom such command tends towards which may not be necessarily backed up with the use of threat or coercive power.<sup>9</sup>*

In Jean Bodeau's attempt to distinguish power from authority He opines that:

*Absolute political power is ability to issue effective commands and ability to have such commands carried out. While political authority is the entitlement to issue commands and to have them obeyed. It is often said that talks about power in political context is the ability to force one's action on person or persons, when they are unwilling to do so. Authority in political sense implies the right to issue command which may be based on personal gift of being rational or being trusted or because of one holding a special office<sup>10</sup>.*

Basically speaking, in a true democratic environment, elected members of legislative houses are expected to make regulations and commands, the right to make such regulations imposes an obligation on the citizenry to conform with the regulations they make and they have the right to receive obedience. This was the reason why speak of power relationship is implicitly to give a prediction of future behaviour derived from a purported causal explanation.

It is however important to argue at this point that statement about power turns not upon the question to rule, but on the adequacy of the causal theory which attempt to predict what person or group of persons will, we

prevail in political decision making. Marx Weber distinguishes between the two senses of authority, likes: *de jure* and *de facto* authority.

Somebody is in authority in the *de jure* sense when he or she had the right to do certain thing conferred on him. This is to say that somebody is in authority in this sense when he has effective power over person or persons but does not have coercive power. He has this power in virtue of being in authority which relates to his ability to bring imposition of sanctions against those who refuse to do what he has a right to expect them to do. it might be on this ground that

Stuart Brown placed his distinction when he argued that:

*Power is not a genetic term of which authority implies imputing legitimacy to the commands of somebody in authority. A person is in authority when his or her order is accorded recognition solely by virtue of his official position and not by virtue of say personal qualities. For instance, in a revolutionary or military government, the presence of such government is not usually accorded full diplomatic recognition by other countries simply because of the fact that the government is not 'legitimate' such a government normally operates by coercion and a leader in this kind of government is tagged de facto ruler because his governance is not recognized or the basis of certain rights uttered on him / her<sup>11</sup>.*

Distinguishing between power and authority as put forward by different political scholars,

Norman. P. Barry posited that:

*If the political order is to survive then power must become authority. Hence power and authority can be used interchangeably. It is therefore not absurd to say that for*

If a man holds a position of authority and is able in virtue of that position to get others to do what he tells them to do, his power is the exercise of authority. In ordinary language and thought power and authority are often used interchangeably. But an analysis of the two concepts reveals that such identification is grossly inadequate at least from a philosophical point of view.<sup>13</sup>

D. D. Raphael however opines that:

obedience to be properly secured, authority must be backed up by power, because of the fact that it is the fear of the sanction that promotes obedience not the sanction itself.

Norman Barry has argued that:

*The understanding of politics can only be sought in authority, just because of its philosophical tenet. A greater understanding of political regularities can be derived from the explanation of 'authority' which describes the internal aspect of behaviour than from the study of 'power' which merely reveals the external, observable aspect of politics<sup>14</sup>.*

Some modern political theorists have however distinguished power from authority by reference to the way obedience is secured. They were of the view that:

"The existence of person or body of persons in authority suggests that obedience is secured by other means than threat and implies that exercise of authority is a product of rules".

It is not therefore absurd to say that continuity and stability can not be guaranteed by power alone, 'authority' therefore suggests rightfulness and legitimacy while 'power' is associated with threat and coercion. Power then can be said not to be 'neutral' because every exercise of someone's value upon another, while authority is the approved use of power. There is then no contradiction if we claim that 'authority' could be distinguished from 'power' in that the right to exercise political power may not be recognized, but political authority is always backed up with formal rules.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 4.1 Summary

The concepts of power and authority constitute one of the most discussed topics in the realm of political philosophy. Scholars have however found it difficult to draw the line between power and authority. This problem emanated from the fact that scholars seemed to have taken these concepts as twin concepts that may be used interchangeably<sup>1</sup>.

In light of this, Chapter One discussed power as posited by different scientists, Marxist and corporatist concepts of power.

Chapter Two focused attention on authority as one of the basic ingredients in the study of politics as posited by political scholars and some philosophers.

Effort was made to examine Max Weber's classification of authority. What the *de jure* and *de facto* authorities are all about shall also be examined as the implications of his unification.

Chapter three of this essay concentrated on the distinctions between power and authority and showed the senses at which they can be used interchangeably and independently of one another.

## 4.2 Conclusion

I do not think it can be correct to say that State Sovereignty consists in supremacy of coercive power, and that this and only this substantiates the state's claim supreme authority. Supreme power is neither, a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantiating the claim. Let us look at each of these objectives in turn<sup>2</sup>.

Supremacy of coercive power is not always necessary to substantiate a claim to supreme authority. This can best be seen in international relations. I grant that the state's claim to supreme authority within its own domain can usually be effective only if the state has at its command coercive power superior to that of any other associations, or group within its jurisdiction. There are occasional exceptions, but generally speaking the authority of the state and its laws will not last unless backed by superior power. This, however, was true also in the days before states were thought of as sovereign states. The idea of sovereignty has its point chiefly in regard to a state's relationship to authoritative bodies that are not located within its own domain, namely, other states and international authorities such as a universal relations, the concept of state sovereignty does not require supremacy of coercive power<sup>3</sup>.

I turn now to the second leg of my criticism of the power theory, supremacy of coercive power is not sufficient to substantiate a claim to



supreme authority. This too can be illustrated from international relation, if we think of the circumstances in which a state will be given or refused recognition by other states. The exercise of effective control over a territory is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The point of the criticism can be seen more clearly, however, if we look this time at the internal situation of a state<sup>4</sup>.

I think that the essence of politic is power. Thus, any pursuit that seeks to unravel some of the mystery about politics must address itself, in the course of that inquiry, to the nature and distribution of power in a society.

One of the objectives of the essay pointed out when and how these concepts could be used separately without conflicting them together and when they would be used interchangeably<sup>5</sup>.

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