

Theory of Power

Power is the central concept of politics.

However like all concepts in politics, it remains a contested concept. There is a disagreement w.r.t. meaning of power, means of power, forms of power, etc.

- Marxist Theory of Power
- Elitist Theory of Power
- Pluralist Theory of Power
- Hannah Arendt's Theory of Power
- (Foucault's) Post modernist conception of power.

Marxist Theory of Power

base - economic structure.

Elitist Theory of Power

Pareto, Mosca, Mithels, C Wright Mills

↓	↓	↘	↗
Circulation of elites	theory of governing/ruling class.	Iron laws of oligarchy	Concept of power elite

Issue: To find who has power & what is the source of power.

Above theories are the result of behavioural movement in Political Science which promoted empirical research.

C Wright Mills Concept of 'power elites'

Whereas other elitist theories were directed against the socialist societies and socialist parties, Mills' analysis is on US democracy. According to him, even in USA, power does not lie in the hands of masses, rather in hands of elites. In USA power elite comprise of federal politicians, big corporate houses and military.

more reflected
in international
sphere

Who are 'Power Elites'?

In every society, there are certain key organisations, those holding top position in key organisations are power elites. It implies that composition of power elites will vary from society to society.

Mills' view of democracy in USA

- USA was not from very beginning under Power Elites. There was sufficient distribution of power in US society. However few developments have given rise to power elites.
- Civil War which strengthened powers of federal government.
- Increasing role of USA in international affairs.
- Economic crisis

According to him decision like throwing bomb on Hiroshima & Nagasaki was decision taken by Power Elites rather than US citizens.

behavioural
imperialist

Pluralist Theory of Power

Pluralism emerged as a criticism to elitism.

Pluralists are also critical of Marxist. For Pluralists,

power is not concentrated in the hands of owners

of means of production as Marxists think or in

the hands of elites as suggested by elitist scholars.

- In democratic societies, power is distributed

among various groups.

Pluralist view suggest that Pressure Groups

hold power in democratic societies. It means

power is not as concentrated that we can call

system oligarchic. But power is fairly distributed.

Democracy is not oligarchy but polyarchy.

Pluralist theory of power was given by

Robert Dahl. Robert Dahl has produced a

study titled 'Who Governs?' The study

is to investigate claims of C. Wright Mills.

w.r.t. US democracy.

Power is not simply held by power elites,

people also have lot of powers, which they

exert as a member of pressure group and

not as an individual. Decision of bombing

Hiroshima & Nagasaki emerged from Power

Elites but these are exceptional situations.

As far as day to day affairs of life are

concerned, people in USA do have lot of powers.

influence decision making through pressure

groups.

Neopluralism

Robert Dahl

Charles Long Lindblom

They accepted that all groups do not have equal power. Corporate class has greater power than other groups. So USA is not a polyarchy but deformed polyarchy, that is tilted in favour of corporate class.

Neopluralist argument comes near to Marxist.

Difference in Marxists & Neopluralists.

- Both agree that corporate class has power but for Marxists only corporate class has power but for pluralists corporate class has more power.
- For Marxists, economically dominant class controls all the structures, but for pluralists neopluralists corporate class controls economic structure and do not monopolize the entire structure.

o Write a short note on Polyarchy & deformed Polyarchy & What are features of Polyarchy

Democracy means power with the people.

At present democracy is concerned to be a philosophical notion. The reality of democracy is a polyarchy. In democracies individuals do not enjoy power but individuals forming associations may compete for their interest & have power.

Perfect democracy is unachievable, the maximum what we can achieve is polyarchy. Liberal democracies

are polyarchies or deformed polyarchies.

Features of polyarchy are

- Competitive party system
- Free & fair elections
- Freedom of press
- Right to dissent

Gramscian notion of Power

It is an improvement over ^{Karl} Marxist notion of Power. For Karl Marx, ownership of means of production alone is a source of power but for Gramsci, ownership over means of production is not enough. Along with war of ~~manoeuvres~~ manoeuvre war of position is needed. Bourgeoisie class have established their power not simply because of controlling the economic structure but also the ideological structures. Marx only talks about visible power or hard power. Marx talks about power of state and power of Bourgeoisie class. Marx overlooked the invisible power, the soft power, the power located in civil society, the power by consent rather than power by coercion. To understand dynamics of power, we need to understand the concept of hegemony.

Hannah Arendt's theory of power.

Comparison betⁿ Hannah Arendt & Gramsci's notion of power

- For Gramsci power is domination whereas for Hannah Arendt, power is empowerment (constructive theory of power).
- For Gramsci, power is economic, political & cultural. For Hannah Arendt, power is political.
- For Gramsci, bourgeoisie class manufacture hegemony. For Hannah Arendt, power is sui generis. It can't be manufactured or stored.
- For Gramsci, power is class based. For H. Arendt, more universalist in nature.

Past-modernist Theory of Power.

Foucault

- o Power is everywhere.
- o Power flows in a society through network of capillaries.
- o Power is not coercive rather productive.
- o Knowledge is power.

Foucault's conception of power.

He has given conception of power from the perspective of postmodernism. He has challenged the conventional understanding of power.

- Power as an attribute of sovereign.
- Ownership of means of production is a source of power.
- Purpose of power is coercion.
- Unidimensional of working of power like sovereign's power on citizens, power of rich over poor.

Forcault brings analysis of power away from political structure and economic structure.

They are not the only structures ^{through} in which power operates. He goes for sociological analysis of power. He analyses power & its operation

among individuals, groups, associations,

institutions. Power is not just concentrated

in few structures but power is dispersed

throughout the society. According to him

power is everywhere. Power flows throughout

the society in the form of network of

capillaries. Power is not in the institutions

but the network of social relations. There

is no beginning or end of power. Power

does not operate in a single dimension.

Power is multidimensional. Ex: Power of

Capitalists on worker, power of worker

on capitalist. Person is powerful & powerless

at the same time. Understanding of power

is relational, situational.

- He does not believe that power is coercive ^{always}

in nature. He talks about the productive

nature of power. Power is creative. Power

creates identities. Power creates governed

mentality, it means power has useful social

function. We do not create power rather

power creates us.

Type of power

Power has discipline. He has analysed how

form of power & its application has changed over

a period of time. Earlier use of power was more visible

associated with sovereign use of power and
explicitly coercive in nature. With the change
in society, emergence of democracy, the manner
& operation of power has changed. The
prominent type of power at present is discipline.
Such norms & systems have been created
which automatically discipline our body &
thoughts. He has studied the impact of schools,
prisons, asylums in created disciplinary power.
Disciplinary power creates governed mentality.

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Concept of Authority

What is authority?

Authority is a legitimate power.

Origin of theories of Authority

Origin is in debate betⁿ Liberals & Marxists.

For Marxists, state represents coercive power.

State is an instrument of coercion. Origin of

state is in force. People obey state out of fear

or out of illusion. There is no real will of

the state. Marxists question legitimacy of

state & prefer withering away of state.

The idea of authority is linked to liberal

thinkers. For liberals, state does not represent

force, but will. According to T.H. Green,

will not force is the basis of the state and

general will is not the will of the state but

will of people for the state. State continues

because it performs useful functions and not

out of fear. The exercise of power by state is

authority not naked power. State uses legitimate

power. Since state's power is legitimate,

state will continue to exist. State is necessary.

Max Weber's contribution to concept of authority

Political system reflects authority, i.e. legitimate

power. Different societies have different

bases of authority. He has given 3 ideal

types of authority.

- Traditional basis of authority

Customs & traditions may be the source of authority.

- Charisma as a basis of authority

(Personality) Charismatic authority becomes prominent during crisis period.

- Rational ^{Legal} basis of authority

Authority based on legal rules which are outcome of rational procedure.

In advanced societies, rational legal basis of authority dominates.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy means what people consider as appropriate. Legitimacy & legality are not same. There may be numerous laws which people may consider illegitimate.

Legitimacy is necessary for governability. Legitimation crisis may result into crisis of governability.

What are indications of legitimacy?

- Governability

If a state is able to govern, it means state enjoys legitimacy. If people are willing to obey laws, pay taxes, honor nat. symbols, participate in political process, in elections; this reflect legitimacy.

On the contrary, rise in public protest, civil disobedience, strikes, hartals, insurgency,

boycott of elections point towards legitimisation crisis.

Why it is important that state converts its power into legitimacy?

State can't rule simply by coercion.

State continues on the basis of consent.

According to Rousseau, "Strongest man is never strong enough unless he transforms his strength into right & his power into authority."

Examine relationship betⁿ legitimacy & hegemony.

Legitimacy belongs to liberal discourse.

& idea of hegemony is Gramscian. For liberals, there has been no revolution against the state

because there is a consent for the state &

legitimacy of state in the eyes of the

people. According to Gramsci, state continues

not because of legitimacy or consent but

because of hegemony. There is no real consent

for the state. The consent is manufactured.

Institutions of civil society manufacture

this consent. War of position is required

before the war of manoeuvre.

Concept of Legitimation crisis

It is given by Habermas. This applies for

the analysis of welfare states. Welfare states

are bound to suffer from legitimisation crisis.

Reason is it works on contradictory principles.

Socialism or distributive justice in politics & capitalism in economics, market economy can sustain welfare provisions to an extent beyond which it becomes unsustainable.

State has to go for "rolling back" of welfare provisions. This creates condition for legitimisation crisis, means welfare state can't ensure welfare on a permanent basis. The only option is socialism.

◦ Examine relationship betⁿ Power, Authority & Legitimacy.

The 3 concepts Power, Authority & Legitimacy are interlinked. They are related to the political system, principles of political obligation, theories of resistance & revolution.

The debate starts with Marxists, who challenge the political obligation of people as they consider state as illegitimate, an instrument of coercion & a classed instrument.

- Liberals defend political obligation by making a differentiation betⁿ power & authority.

State represents authority rather than naked power. Authority is legitimate power. Authority reflects the consent of the people. State continues because people consider it legitimate.

- Marxist challenge the issue of legitimacy.

For Gramsci it is manufactured, not real.

For Habermas, Legitimation crisis is inevitable.