

Competing Theories of Political Power and Power Relations in Post Colonial Nigeria: An Overview

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Abstract

Issues concerning the concept of power have been as controversial as its meaning. Thus, many Theories have clashed in their efforts to outsmart the other in their interpretations of that single central phenomenon that determines the fate of all societies. These explanatory theories and concepts have been so contentious just as new lines of thought are generated. This paper therefore, takes a critical look at some of these competing theories and concepts of power. It also tries as much as possible to point out some peculiar arguments of each and goes further to interrogate the power relations in post colonial Nigeria. It argues that political power is not only widely used in the Nigerian state, but has also been variously abused by those entrusted with it to intimidate the citizenry; as they cart away the state's resources without qualms. It concludes that while the reality of power is uncontestable and relevant for development in a post colonial State like Nigeria, its use must be checked for effectiveness

Key Words: Political Power, Theory, Concept, Post-Colonial, Political Science

Introduction

Debates on the Concept of Power have been so recurrent. This is unconnected with the fact that the Concept, as reasoned by Morgenthau (1975), poses one of the most difficult and controversial problems of Political Science. In fact, no other concept in the field of Political Science perhaps, has generated fierce and fascinating academic disputes/debates than the Concept of Power, which remains vague and abstract. Clearly, conceptions of Power are diverse and divergent; and the degree of the diversity has led several modern Political Theorists to claim that "Power" has, and can have, no single agreed upon meaning, but is an "essentially contested concept" (Ball, 1993).

From the time of Aristotle to Hobbes, Political Theorists were mainly concerned with power relations within a given community (Sille, 1963); hence, a lot has been written about the nature of power, how to define it, where to go in search of its empirical indicators, and how to measure it once we locate it (La Palombara, 1974). Therefore, several books on political power pointedly highlight the areas of disputes in the field of power study and they cover etymological, conceptual, ontological, pedagogical and/or methodological issues. Put

differently, power, as a central Concept in political analysis presents perplexing problems of both normative and theoretical cum methodological varieties. Consequently, the contested nature of power concept has set Mainstream and the Marxist Theorists on academic collision course on all aspects of the study of the Concept of Political Power.

As the scholars are entangled in this seeming academic confusion, the politicians and leaders who exercise it are almost consumed by the practical dimension of the Concept. This paper essentially, carries out an overview of Power Concept and reviews its contending theories. It evaluates their usefulness in the study, analysis and interpretation of power relations and politics of contemporary Africa with post-colonial Nigeria as the main focus.

Conceptual Clarifications

From all analytical explications, one of the issues Political Scientists want to resolve is the intellectual dispute over the Concept of Power, that is, terminological disputes. As an essentially contested Concept in Political Science, power stands out as a very simple concept to understand but difficult to conceptualize. In fact, from the time of Machiavelli, consideration about political power represents a central empirical, as well as, normative focus for speculation and research into political and governmental systems.

Inspired by what he saw as the thrilling character of the concept, Morgenthau (1975) conceived power as comprising anything that establishes and maintains the control of men over men. He further, stressed that power in the political sense refers to the mutual relation of control among the holders of public authority and between the latter and the people at large. Therefore, power covers all social relationships which serve the end, from physical violence to the most psychological ties by which one mind controls another. Here, control is the focus.

On his part, Shively (2003) conceptualized power as the ability of one person or persons to cause another to do what the first wishes, by whatever means. Power, he continued, can be exercised as coercion when one is forced to do something he or she did not want to do; as persuasion when we convince someone to do what we want as if it is what he or she wishes to do. He summarize this conception of power by positing that all politics involves the use of power, and such power may be implicit or manifest, legitimate or illegitimate.

Etzioni-Halevy (1981) goes further to provide the same but slightly different dimensions of power in terms of its portioning credentials when she posits that power is the ability to control or influence the allocation of resources which affects people's life chances through political process. A renowned Sociologist, Max Weber (1968), concurs to the effect that power remains "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis of which his probability rests". From all indications, Weber is not alone in this line of argument

Contributing to the literature on political power, Chabal (1994) submits to the effect that power is a first-order Concept, that is, it is the building-block, the fundament of all political analysis. He holds that politics is about power and power is minimally about the balance between control and consent which governs the relation between the ruler and the ruled.

Dalh (1957) defined power as one actor's ability to make another do something that the latter "would not otherwise do". A great philosopher and thinker Thomas Hobbes posits that "power is one's present means to obtain some future apparent good" and life itself is a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceaseth only in death (in Tuck, 1991).

Sharp (1980) believes that there is nothing more powerful than power which he sees as "The totality of means, influence and pressures including authority, reward and sanctions available for use to achieve the objectives of the power-holders, especially the institutions of Government, the State, and groups opposing either of them". The ability of power to create a Dissimilarity is at the centre of Giddens' (1984) impression when he notes that "power is not inherently oppressive; it is simply the ability to make a difference or the capacity to achieve outcomes and is not as such, an obstacle to freedom and emancipation but is their very medium". Thus, having power, then, is a sine qua non for being able to act as a morally responsible human being.

Jaffe (1993) posits that political power, whenever and by whoever exercised, means empowerment, authorization to rule over on behalf of and in the name of empowering agents. Power he finally states depends upon agreement and authorization. From Marxist perspective, political power is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another (Goulbourne, 1979). This issue of classes as raised another interesting aspect of the Concept

as pointed out by Lasswell and Kaplan (1950). In their classical book, *Power and Strategy* cited in Ball (1993), the duo argues that:

Power is participation in the making of decisions ... it is the threat of sanctions which differentiate power from influence in general. Power is a special case of the exercise of influence: it is the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for non-conformity with the policies intended.

In the same vein, John Locke's use of the term in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), frankly submitted that "Political Power, then, I take to be a right of making Laws, with penalties of death and consequently all less penalties" (in Dahl, 1976).

Origin, Nature and Meaning of Power

There have been a variety of theories on the significance and centrality of power in Political Science inquiries. Political Philosophers of all epochs have sought to resolve puzzles regarding its origin, nature, meaning, purpose and process of locating and evaluating it in all known human societies. Undoubtedly, the concern for power was well established in political thoughts.

Hence, from Plato's *Republic* through Machiaveli's *The Prince* (1513), Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1702), to Hegel and Marx's writings in the 19th century, reference to, and analysis of political power can be found in abundance (Linsler, 2000). Obviously, the origin and nature of power deal strictly with matters relating to the advent and maturation of Nation-State, as well as, its basic qualities or characteristics. On these two issues, contending Theorists have put forward their views in volumes of literature.

The Theory of Divine Origin

Exponents of this theory assert that the state is a creation of the *Divine Will* and it is ruled by Kings who are not like ordinary men but the agents of God who possess unlimited power. To protest against their power or authority is to incur the wrath of God and there is provision of punishment by the *Divine Will* (Nwoye, 2002). It can be inferred from the main thrust of the theory that its exponents agree that power originated from the creation of state by God who vested the power to rule the state on Divine Kings whose power cannot be protested against or challenged. To them, any form of rebellion attracts the wrath of God.

Social Contract Theory

Expectedly, the Social Contract Theorists challenged the central point of the Theory of Divine Origin which asserts that the state and its power were created by God and not by men. These theorists include Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-1704) and Rousseau(1712-1778). Contrary to the views of the Theory of Divine Origin, the central argument of Social Contract Theorists hinges on the belief that, men at a particular point in history, freely agree to establish a social contract under a government. This required that each and everyone must keep faithfully to the terms of the contract.

However, John Locke, in his *Two Treaties of Civil Government* published in 1690 was more elucidating in his version of Social Contract. He argued that to address issues of insecurity and threat which people felt in the state of nature under which he wrote, two contracts would be necessary. The first is a contract of each with all where all men agreed to form a community in order to fully secure and protect themselves. There is a second contract between the society and the Government. By this contract, the community empowers the Government to rule the country and to act as the trustees of the security of the people.

From Locke's account, the Social Contract Theorists locate the origin of political power from the time when men came together to form the State. It can be argued from the submission above that both Theories of Divine Origin and Social Contract agreed that power originated from the advent and maturation of nation-state.

However, while Hobbes holds that the power which men consented to the state is unlimited and irrevocable for men in an attempt to escape from the horrors of anarchy, gave themselves a despot as master; Locke on the other hand, maintains that state power is limited and revocable; for men saw the advantage of a state but they do not agree to make it omnipotent (Laski, 1978).

The Marxist Theory

Contrary to the views of the Mainstreams Theorists on the origin of political power, the Marxists Theorists among whom were Hegel, Marx, Miliband, Poulantzas, etc, associate the origin of power with the social relationship in production process in any society all through known human history. Miliband, an erudite Marxist Scholar states that the primary Marxist's

view of the state (and its power) finds its most explicit expression in the famous aphorism of the Communist Manifesto:

The Executive of the Modern State is but a Committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie; and political power is, merely the organized power of one class for oppressing and dominating another (in Goulboune, 1979; Ake, 1981).

Most crucially, these scholars stress that Western capitalist societies witness the creation of the nation-state by indigenous bourgeoisie, in the wake of their ascendant power, to provide a framework of law and various institutions which are essential for the development of capitalist relations of production.

It may be argued from the central points of both the Mainstream and Marxist Theories, that both are in agreement that state is a human creation. However, while the mainstream theorists see the nature and purpose of state power as means to regulate human activities/excesses and to take proper care of their welfare, the Marxist's maintain that the nature and purpose of power is to promote the interests of the capitalist ruling class while oppressing and dehumanizing the masses as epitomized in the Lord-Self relationship in the Feudal epoch and the bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat in the capitalist society.

There is also confusion over what has been labeled 'Power terms'. These are terms that are used interchangeably with power. They include, influence, coercion, authority compulsion, control, legitimacy, force, inducement, govern-persuasion, etc. For these power terms, the study of power has become continually vulnerable to great disputes over terminology, treatment and emphasis. It was for this confusion that some scholars treat power under different Power Terms. Thus, Dahl (1976) perceives power as influence; Weber (1946) sees it as domination, while Morgenthau (1975) perceives it as authority.

Controversies are also awash among political analysts on whether power is a tangible or intangible thing, that is, whether power is like cars we possess or rather merely a relationship that applies to two or more units of analysis.

Also, the nature of power has posed one of the major problems analysts want to explain in any political systems, that is, the magnitude or degree of power one actor has over another,

how this power is distributed in the system, the scope and domain of control that different individuals or actors have, exercise, or are subject to.

Elaborating further on this point, Etzioni-Halevy (1981), having studied the relations of power in all human societies, transcending from feudalism to absolutism and further from absolutism to democracy stated unequivocally that major concern of political analysts/theorists for over 25 centuries with the study of relations of power, is not the type of Government in each of the mentioned epochs of human societies, but the degree of Government. In other words, the concern of political analysts centered on amount of power Government in each regime in human history exercises or possesses.

Contending Theories in Power Study: A Review

It is necessary at this point to examine some of the existing contending theories in the study of power. These theories are usually wide ranging and conflict with one another on almost every issue relating to power study. Prominent here, and as identified by Etzioni-Halevy (1981) include Mainstream and the Marxist Schools of Thought. However, she further subdivided the Mainstream into the Pluralist Model and the Elitist Model. Therefore, this section of the paper presents a brief overview of each of the three models: Pluralist, Elitist and Marxist models or views.

The Pluralist View

This group holds that in the 20th century, political power has come to be increasingly fragmented and diffused (Etzioni-Halevy, 1981). This has to do with the collapse of absolutism marked with the growth of centralized state power while the advent of democracy marked the reversal of this process (Domhoff, 1967 in Etzioni-Halevy, 1981). The Pluralist theories are said to be peculiarly timely as they attack the theory of an omni-competent State at a time when the State has actually shown itself to be the strongest power on earth, much stronger in its power to dispose of life and substance than the Church, economic union, or the ties of language and race. Thus, in a Pluralist Power State, different groups exercise a certain influence on the policy-making process, while none of them possess a monopoly or decisive share of power; since these groups check and counterbalance each other. The Pluralists according to Etzioni-Halevy (1981) do not recognize any distinct power Elite and consider the idea of such Elite to be more of fiction than reality.

Studies have shown that the enormous power that Government is invested with is being attacked by pressures from these different groups and to keep itself in power, it must display maximal responsiveness to these pressures, so as to keep everybody reasonably happy. Thus, the independent power held by the Government becomes minimal (Domhoff, 1967).

The Pluralists also hold that the limited and diffused power in a state is due to the framework of the constitution in a democracy which divides power among the branches of the Federal Government in a marvelously ingenious system of checks and balances and which divides power between the national and state governments.

The Elitist View of Political Power

The Elitist Theory of Power has in its fold, prominent scholars among whom are Vilfredo Pareto, Roberto Michels, C. Wright Mills, (Parry, 1980). The basic contention of this School of Thought is that all societies are divided into the few who rules and the many who are ruled. The first group, that is the rulers, effectively monopolizes power and is able to enjoy its advantages, while the ruled, the masses, acquiesces in this arrangement and is mostly passive. Studies show that the elite in society succeed themselves at every period of political crisis that culminate in overthrow or removal through election. In all cases, the masses never have the chance to take over the place of the elite. Even with the advent and maturation of democracy this enviable pattern of domination and subjugation still persists unchallenged (Etzioni-Halevy, 1981). Thus, the Elite rule exclusively in a democracy as they ever did before. These Theorists hold that granted that democracy is Government by the people that the survival of democracy rests squarely in the shoulders of the elite than on that of the people (Dye and Zeigler, 1975).

The dominance of the elite in the political governance of democratic States is elucidated by both Joseph Schumpeter and C.W. Mills in their writings cited in Etzioni-Halevy (1981). Schumpeter, an elitist scholar in 1962, held that democracy gives people the ability to choose between competing elite groups but not necessarily the ability to influence their policies once they come to power. Mills stressed that the dominance of the elite in democratic society is eminently secured. Not only has this dominance not been eroded by the advent of democracy,

in recent years it has, in fact, been growing while the masses have become increasingly powerless, politically impotent, and therefore, alienated and apathetic (Mills, 1959b).

The elite hold also that even elections confer no real political power on the public, as they are only important mainly for their symbolic value. Finally, they (elite) contend that interest groups are not a counterbalance to elite power, but rather a platform for that power. The elite in every society is composed of three interlocking groups namely, the High Political Office-holders, the Leaders of Capitalism and top Military Command who came together and are sustained by the Elite 3C's -i.e. Conspiracy, Consciousness and Cohesion (Mills, 1959b). However, it is pertinent to note that these three groups within the Elite Class vie with each other for dominance. Therefore, the relative power of each of the 3 groups changes over time and none of them is permanently in a controlling position.

The Marxist View of Power

The central point of this power theory is forcefully expressed in the Communist Manifesto which states that:

The executive of the Modern State is but a Committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie; and political power is, merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. Power is used as oppressive agent in civil society, for suppressing proletarian interest in favour of capital (Marx and Engels, 1975: 33).

However, contemporary Marxists like Rulf Miliband (1973), have qualified the above view by making a distinction between the 'Governing and Ruling Classes'. Governing, he holds, concern the day-to-day routine work of administration and decision-making that makes the political process run smoothly, while ruling on the other hand, implies the holding of decisive power which constrains the political process and determines how it will be run and in whose interest. In other words, the ruling class controls the State power of authoritative allocation of values within the political community. It wields and decides who gets what, when, how and why. The Marxist in their view of power does not concern itself much with who governs in modern capitalist society but with the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class that rules. For them the Governing group (State apparatus) merely serves the interest of the ruling capitalist class. This view will be properly appreciated when one recounts the role of the Police, Army, and other State apparatus in the rigging of 2003, 2007, 2011 General Elections in Nigeria, particularly the Governorship and Presidential Elections.

The proponents of the Marxist view of political power makes it vivid that even though the capitalist class does not govern exclusively, it still rules exclusively, and thus, the basic situation, as it was in which the political system still works overwhelmingly to promote the ruling class' interests (Etzioni-Halevy, 1981).

Some Marxist scholars seem to agree with the Elitist that the growth in Government power benefits no other group than the capitalist ruling class just as they also agree with the Elitist view that "democracy is little better than a sham, designed to lend the public a sense of power without actual power. The electoral system gives people the illusion that insurmountable cleavages between parties exist and that momentous issues are at stake.

Finally, we emphasize that Marxist Theorists unambiguously connect relations of power to relations of production. That is to say that these Theorists attach priority to the social division of labour by focusing on ownership as a critical factor in assessing power relations.

Empirical Evaluation of Power Study

The study of power usually poses questions such as who rules a particular society and in whose interest? Before the 1919 publication of Benjamin Kidd's *The Science of Power*; E.J. Strachey's *Coming Struggle for Power* in 1932, I.S. Munro's *Through Fascism to World Power* in 1933 and Charles Merriam's celebrated *Political Power, Its composition and Incidence* in 1934, Linser (2000) observed that very few books (at least in English) dealing either in political thought, history, or philosophy had the term power in their works, but can be found in title of works on religion and the history of religion, physics and mechanics, constitutional law and so on. However, it was not until the 20th century that the term 'Power' begins to appear regularly in the title of works on political and social theories.

Hence, power emerged as explicit concern for theoretical discourse in the decades between 1920 and the late 1960 and became popularized after many American Political Scientists' participation in what has been dubbed the "Community Power Debate" (Parry, 1980). It must be noted that the difficulty of analyzing power was manifested and popularized in the methodological disputes in the study of power in a small American Community (Hunter, 1953 in Parry, 1980).

In the study of Community Power, three major methods were used. They include Reputational technique, the Position method and the Decision-Making method. Reputational technique depends upon gathering a panel of knowledgeable people in a community and then asking them who in their opinion is/are the most powerful individual/s in their community.

Also the Position technique in power study simply identifies people who hold community position of apparent influence and concludes that they are truly powerful for that very reason.

Finally, Decision-Making model presumes that power can be studied only in situations where it is visibly exercised, hence, the argument that scholars must analyze concrete decisions, which communities make on important matters. This method emanated from Dahl (1961).

Scholars have criticized all the three techniques of power study as being value-laden. They posit that each method used to study power configuration in a particular community will inevitably reveal an apparent power pattern linked to that method, just as definition of power and elite employed in the study will generate perceived different conclusions concerning the shape of community power (Parry,1980).

The basic problem inherent in the study of power like in any Social Science research is that different men have diverse perceptions of reality. Therefore, answers to questions about who rules a community; who takes decision and has reputation can vitiate the findings of the study not minding the method used. The validity of the panel's answer is also suspect. Studies have challenged some of the fundamentals of the three methods of power study and criticize them for the errors under three headings: Procedural, Substantive and Conceptual.

The answers men seek determine the questions they ask. As such the various methods for locating power do not themselves seem to possess any intrinsic validity. None of this techniques and theories standing alone can be useful in evaluating and explaining political power dynamics in Nigerian State but a convergence of theories.

Political Power Relations in Post Colonial State of Nigeria

With the benefit of hindsight provided by the above discussions, one strongly agrees with the parlance that the struggle for power is universal in time and space and is undeniable fact of experience. It cannot be denied that throughout historic times, regardless of social, economic and political conditions, States have met each other in contest for power either:

- (1) To keep power (Politics of Status Quo);
- (2) To increase the scope and domain of their power (Imperialism) or;
- (3) To demonstrate power (Politics of Prestige).

Political power originates in agreement, which means that some persons or agencies have been given the right to make decision for others whose acquiescence legitimizes the decision-makers' actions. Stressing the point further, Erwin and Jaffe (1993) posit that political power, whenever and by whoever exercised, means empowerment, authorization to rule on behalf of and in the name of empowering agents.

However, Nigeria like other African States presents a paradox in this direction. In fact, the irony of political power in Nigeria as in most African States is that often times, legitimately empowered rulers use offices to oppress, destroy or rob the people who empowered them. They ignore the agreement that installed them, violate the conditions imposed on officeholders within the Constitution of the land and further, substitute violence for power.

In line with the above view, Ake (1981) argued that the overdeveloped structure of the new States together with the possibility of its use for domination, exploitation and oppression had sparked off intense competition between and among the emerging indigenous power blocs for the control of the institution. The ensuing struggle for state power, he maintained, had become so intense, normless and so absorbing with politics degenerating into warfare. Ake's position vividly explains the quantum of violence that goes with quest for political power in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

Collaborating Ake's view and shading more light on the perversion and corruption of goals of political power in Africa, a *UN Security Council Report on Africa* observed that:

The nature of political powering in many African States together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power is a key source of conflict across the continent Where there is insufficient

accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means to change or replace leadership or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively important and the stakes become dangerously high. 77: is situation is exacerbated when as is often the case in Africa, the State is the major provider of employment and political parties are largely either regionally or ethnically base (in Okereke, 2002).

This observations suit correctly the political situation in Nigeria except for the fact that political parties rather than being only ethnic or regional is also class based.

The crises of legitimacy and nation-building, or even the near collapse of Nigeria State is traceable to the corrupt means successive regimes hijacked State power in a so called democratic system since the 1999 General Elections. Hence, democratic power in Nigeria has been converted to absolute power. The acquisition of State power by the Elite has changed from means of good governance and protection of the citizens to become an avenue for primitive accumulation and the incidence of high politics, and fight for the spoils of office has generated diffidence and insecurity with the leadership operating under siege and completely absorbed in the politics of self-preservation. Otherwise how else would one explain the ugly development that engulfed the PDP leadership?

Consequent on the above, clear evidence of the poverty of political power in Nigeria and African States pushed Diamond *et al*(1998) to describe the nature of State power in Nigeria as a culture and supporting culture of prebendalism. He further perceived Nigeria as falling into a state of praetorianism reminiscent of Huntington's absence of effective political institution capable of mediating, refining and moderating group political action (Okereke, 2002).

Nigeria, over the years, has exhibited features of a country with inept leadership. Hence Falolu (1985) perceived the regime of Shehu Shagari as a Government of debauchery; while the regimes of Babangida and Abacha resulted into unmitigated disaster; even the regimes of Obasanjo, Yar' Adua and Jonathan also demonstrated similar pulverizing tendency reminiscent of a Presidential *Leviathan* with State power being used against villages and villagers agitating for popular values within the country and their own share of democracy dividends.

Regrettably, State power in Nigeria has degenerated into an instrument of primitive accumulation and plundering of national wealth for private and sectional purposes rather than for common good of all citizens. Thus, the quest to control its apparatus transformed politics into warfare with various warlords operating from tribal, class, religious and other sectional bases.

All arguments about whether Nigeria should organize a National Sovereign Conference or mere National Conference are the latest in our political vocabulary. Political Reform Dialogue is aimed at causing political tsunami that will change the course of power dynamics and configuration in Nigeria.

Conclusion

It is not an overstatement to assert that the history of political philosophy is that of changing the nature of State power, as political power shapes and reshapes human societies in accordance to what is needed or desirable over the known period in human history. It is for this reason that Etzion-Halevy (1981) vocally stated that the major concern of Political Theorists for over 25 centuries with the study of relations of power, is not the type of Government in each period of human society, but the degree of Government (Huntington in Etzioni-Halevy, 1980), that is, the power Government in each epoch from feudalism to democracy exercises or possesses.

It is also clear from this study that centrality and significance of power notwithstanding, the Concept is still beset with conceptual and methodological disarray. Hence, the origin of power, its nature, purpose, and technique of locating it are all subject to scholarly disputes and debates among academics of diverse ideological orientations.

It is in this light therefore, that one will appreciate the fact that the study of power has generated one of the most celebrated and popular academic debates in the history of the development of Political Science discipline.

These debates, which pitched American Political Scientists in 1950 and late 1960s, under Floyd Hunter and his associates who studied Atlanta City in 1953 using Reputational methods, and C.W. Mills and his associates who used Positional methods to study National

Power, and Robert Dahl who used Decision-Making method to locate the group that possess power in New Haven City, were all confronted with charges and countercharges and dismissed by critics for procedural, substantive and conceptual pathologies (Parry, 1981).

Since our interest is not to go into the details of these great methodological disputes of power study, we, however, submit that these celebrated debates popularized the concept of power and facilitated its delineation as a separate area of study and research in the discipline of Political Science.

We have in the course of this study highlighted the main thrust of all the theories applicable in the study of power such as the Theory of Divine Origin, Social Contract Theory and Marxists Theory with regards to issues of origin, nature and purpose of power. We also looked at the position of the Pluralist, Elitist and Marxist Theories, with their accompanying techniques of locating power in a community (Reputational, Positional and Decision-Making) as applied to the methodological debates in America in the 1950s-1960s.

However, we may finally hold that the contested nature of power concept, its recent emergence as a separate area of research and study have given it the character of perhaps, the most perplexing and controversial concept in Political Science. Thus, till date, scholars still disagree on an acceptable meaning of power and other major issues concerning power study. This paper made an overview study of power concept without detailed critique of its theories. The intention is to present panoramic view of power for other interested scholar to carry out detailed and expert study of its various aspects.

There is no doubt that we have been able to stimulate interest of students and researchers in the area of power study particularly in its application in the study and evaluation of power dynamics and configuration in the conduct of African *nar* Nigeria politics and administration. This new interest is propelled by the danger of corruption of political power by African leaders which has impelled a revision of the validity of democratic values in African politics. In Africa, democracy has lost its sacred meaning as Government of the people, for the people and by the people. This is a great challenge to Schools of the present generation which must develop a political theoretical roadmap to checkmate the criminality of African political leadership, who in their desperation, obsession, and rabid bid to acquire and retain political

power, usually adopt anti-people policies and rule the countries with exceedingly cruel and repugnant methods that are ruinous both to the State and the people just to hang on to power.

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