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STATE POLITICAL POWER: A THEORETICAL EXPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

The major problem evaluated in the study was to establish the shape of political power, since it has been in constant motion. The methodology of study was the content analysis by which the nature of 'potere', 'power' derived from Greek to refer to 'the ability to cause other to comply to one's wish' was appraised. The method revealed that the shape of political power or any form of power is indeed round. This explains why no one person including the world strong leaders have been unable to retain power permanently. It further exposed that when any one attempts to halt political power from rolling away, he translates into a dictator because he would have to take many actions which violates the fundamental human rights of the citizenry. It recommended among others that power should be exercised responsibly in governance, ensuring that through the processes and structure, priority is given to uplifting the human conditions. Also, that the knowledge of the shape of state political power, presupposes peaceful, less rancorous politicking without a 'do or die' attitude as in Nigeria, in the course of rendering services to the society. It is a lesson for statemen in the third world and Nigeria in particular. By this means those who possess power now could continue to have influence, when power roll away from them. It resolved that responsible and fair use of power, would leave its possessors with influence, even when he is no more holding power. The determination of the nature of power, presupposes that there should be responsible search for it, as the probability of it rolling to one's domain is high.

1. INTRODUCTION

Power or Latin 'potere' has been utilized from antiquity, yet not enough is known about its shape. This is perhaps because of its intangible nature. Political power could be considered as the mechanism for societal creation, maintenance and sustenance, yet many do not know the shape of

political power except for its capacity to compel compliance to legitimate order. The knowledge of the shape of political power, is capable of generating peace and cooperation in its pursuit in the state. This is because when the citizens who must have been brought together through the use of political power of conquest,

annexation and negotiation, are galvanized together, through the twin processes of nation and state building into a nation state, are made aware of the shape of political power, they would not turn the processes of political contest into warfare as is often the case in the third world and particularly in Nigeria. This is because it would have been clear that as long as one remains in the political orbit of power, it would roll into its domain in a matter of time.

The major objective of this study was to establish that political power has a shape and this shape is round or oval, which enabled it to roll from one political domain to another. It is this shape which has made it impossible for anyone person to retain political power permanently. It is the nature of power to roll away after sometime.

The subsidiary purposes include; (i) bringing to the fore the knowledge of the shape of political power to all and especially, to those in the political power circuit, would reduce to the barest minimum the warlike nature of politics (forms of resolving societal conflict) in the society. This is because in classical Athenian city-state of Athens, there was no violent in the resolution of society's problem. (ii) that because it is the nature of political power to roll from domain to another, men need not struggle viciously as in warfare in politicking. This awareness should ensure that political arena is peaceful as it was in the Greek City state of Athens,

where in the ecclesia, public decisions were taken without rancor. Consequent upon this, there was no second term for any public officer to exercise power except the military generals. The exercise of public functions rolled to someone else. Political power has its orbit, anyone located within it, is likely to be adorned with power, if they are located in the political power circular orbit system. (iii) This nature of power calls for 'good governance' that is, fair, just, inclusive and responsible use of power by its possessor in order to sustain influence. (iv) This rounded nature of power account for the reason why no one has ever retained power permanently in the world. Consequently, the pursuit of political power should be peacefully conducted without the application of violent acts. The major ingredient which set political power in motion is alternative ideas against what is being done by the possessor of power. This is often wrongly referred to as 'opposition'. When the alternative sounds more plausible, it is then that those expressing it are expected to take power and invest the new idea in the polity in order to add greater value. The ignorance of the shape of political power and its utility, led to the various political conflicts in all political municipalities including Nigeria. It inadvertently provides a lead that those who possess power and abhor criticism have dictatorial tendencies, because they would resist the attempt of political power from rolling away from

them. This would give birth to dictatorship.

2. THE PROBLEM

The problematic addressed in this study concerned the fact that political power has been exercised from time immemorial without anyone knowing its shape or form. However, the knowledge of its shape and form, would have tremendous consequences of immense benefit to the polity. The study then asserted that political power has a shape or form. This shape or form is round or oval, which enable it to roll along political power orbit or circuit and stop in the domain of those who exercise considerable influence in the political orbit. It then remains there for a while before rolling away.

The main issue is that if political power were not roundly shaped, it would not have had the rolling ability, perhaps one person, especially the strong would have been able to retain political power. However, after it is domicile in one political domain, certain political forces, would cause it to begin movement, then it stops in another for a duration of time.

Furthermore, because those who seek power do not know its shape and dynamics, they then pursue power as a 'do or die' affair. By this means many unconventional tactics are deployed towards grappling or holding onto power. By such actions, the political path is dislocated and violence become

the outcome as a result of the ignorance of the shape and form of political power

The ignorance of the shape of political power, by the practitioners constitute considerable problem in the polity, because it is what account for the warlike nature of politics in Nigeria which, more often than not, consume human lives, and more economic resources than ought to have been used.

In classical Greek polity of Athens, citizens gather at the ecclesia to take public decision, nominate those who would executed it for a duration and pass the power to others from other 'demes' (wards) to also exercise their capacity in the delivery of public services. There were no crises because they knew that by the nature of political power, it would certainly roll to their domain. Since June 15, 1215 when the 'Magna carta' was created in Britain, the shape of political power was set in motion leading to the 'glorious revolution'. The acquaintance with the shape of political power in Nigeria and indeed the continent, would restore decency in the search for and expectation of political power.

3. CONCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL POWER

The words 'power and potent' were derived from the Latin '*potere*' meaning 'to be able'. In its most general sense, power is the capacity to effect outcomes. To effect, means, to cause or bring about. Outcomes are actions or

results. Power is thus, the capacity to cause or bring about actions or results. Power is above all a capability or a potential. It is rather, an ability that someone possesses or that inheres in something. Depending on its specific form, this ability can be held by inanimate object (sun, the atom molecule), animal (the horse power), individuals (a strong leader), groups (dominant class), or institutions (US Presidency). Political power means the ability to determine or influence the decisions or behavior of government officials (Sodaro, *etal*,2008). A survey of other scholars would reveal supplementary elements of the contents of power which determined it shape and the momentum thereof. It is instructive to state outright that it is only a round or spherical object which has the natural capacity to roll or glide like a rolling stone. This is the shape assumed by political power and any other capacity to enforce one's will on the other. It is instructive to note that the one who is under the political control of another, could later come under the control of the latter.

Rowe, for instance, perceived it as consisting of; (i) the means of affecting the behavior of another. The possessor of power use force to impose their will (ii) It is a component which is widely approved that rulers cannot rule by authority alone, they must from time to time, coerce. (iii) Authority and power may pass gradually or dramatically from one

individual or group to another and be either dispersed or concentrated. Even where power and authority are concentrated e.g in Communist states, it rolls as ball. In the vast majority of ballistic situations, there is no one that has kept it permanently. (iv) Political power is what is sought by politically active persons in order to cause (influence) certain actions that would otherwise not have taken place to take place. (v) It is sought to cause 'changes in behavior' in the positive direction which adds value to human existentialism (Rowe, 1969).

Ball, on the other hand, claimed it is a key concept in the study of politics. He posited that if politics is the means for the resolution of conflict then:

- a) The distribution of power within the political community determines how the conflict is resolved and whether the resolution would be efficiently observed by all parties.
- b) In order to avoid semantical difficulties, power and authority would be use as a form of 'influence'.
- c) Drawing from Robert Dahl, 'influence' in this context would refer to 'relation among actors in which one actor induces other actors to act in some way they would not otherwise act'.
- d) It is then the capacity to affect another's behavior by the threat of some form of sanction.
- e) The penalties for opposing the holder of political power may be much more extreme, such as

imprisonment or even death (Ball, 1979).

Morgenthau, discussing the power spectacle submitted that in the international context it would consist of;

- a) Struggle for power
- b) It could be obtained through nonpolitical means such as technical cooperation and through international organizations (the ball (power) rolling through national boundaries).
- c) Power is a means to an end (when the ball roll to you, what ends did you achieve with it for mankind ('*arete*').
- d) Power in this context means 'man's control over the minds and actions of other men-it is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. The influence generated by the possessor of political power over the mind of other rests on three (3) premises viz; the expectation of benefits, the fear of disadvantages and respect or love for men or institutions (Morgenthau, 1973).
- e) Nations also have power to influence other nations. National power is constituted by two components relatively stable and constantly changing elements. These are; geography, one's geographical location could mean security and power to itself so that others cannot easily reach you without you being aware of their approach. This confers power of some kind to the state

concerned. The USA, Great Britain and many others continentally detached states are conferred with these power expediencies by nature.

Natural resources such as food - one's ability to be self-sufficient is an indication of national power because it would reduce the capacity of the other nations to sway another which depend on it for its food supply. Food is today an instrument of politics. The availability of raw material to enable domestic production to go on reduces dependence and raises the stake of independence and power.

Industrial capacity-refers to a state's capacity to change the forms of raw materials through massive industrial complex into a more useful form of goods. Military preparedness is another criterion, technical capacity is yet another, leadership and population is critical component (Morgenthau, 1973).

Igwe (2005) in his 'Politics and Globe Dictionary' stated that power is the capacity to achieve an outcome through an actual use or threat of coercion and, in effect, the essence of politics sometimes inappropriately viewed as the opposite of influence instead of weakness. It is instructive to note here that before the possessor of power is able to induce a particular behavior in another, three conditions need to be met, these are; he has a physical force to compel obedience, it is in the interest of the other party to obey, or it is a mutually assured benefit.

Lain Mclean and Alistair McMillan on their part described power as the ability to make people (or things) do what they would not otherwise have done. The capacity to affect other's behavior in this form according to David Hume as cited in Mclean and McMillan arose from; contract, usurpation or conquest, without fair consent, voluntary subjection of the people, migration, colonization and military victory.

Hume concluded that all these are subject to force and violence. Politics in this context is about 'might rather than right'. Power is the central concept, it is concerned with which group or persons dominate, get their own way or are best able to pursue their own interests in societies (Mclean and McMillan, 2003). Bertrand Russel quoted in the same source described 'power' as the phenomenon which produces intended effects, but it illustrated power by demonstrating it thus; (i) when 'A' has effect on 'B' choices and actions. (ii) When 'A' has the capacity to move 'B's choices and actions in ways that 'A' intends. (iii) When 'A' has the capacity to override opposition from 'B'. These scholars have referred to power and influence in their various treatises yet none stated nor referred to the shape of political power. They however, referred to a critical component of the shape of power, the constant changing nature.

4. PERSPECTIVE OF ANALYSIS: POLITICAL VIRTUE

The framework 'virtue' or 'vigor' was drawn from Latin 'arete' from political theory. Every political theory does not only explain reality, it also prescribes conduct as it is herein submitted. It is philosophical to ask, 'with whom was political power originally anchored'. Who were the original sources of political power and authority? As late as the sixth (6th) century B.C, it was a common assumption that nobility or people with virtue ('arete', human excellence), people who were with noble blood which were inherited from divine ancestors. Virtue or goodness became a word once more endowed, as in tradition, with transcendent meaning and absolute moral value.

In Aristotle conception 'virtue' was translated as moral perfection, and transcendent value. It became purely a 'private' and inward affair'; it then became conceived as an ethic of the world community. In the Roman life, virtue became connected with politics as the moral achievement of the philosopher who engages in politics for the sake of the common good, solely out of a sense of duty. In the polis, individual virtue and the moral and institutional health of society were mutually dependent. To the Stoic, virtue was something cultivated in private which profited the '*res publica*' (the commonwealth), in its application to political tasks. The corruption of the virtue in man generated the disposition to enforce virtue in another leading

to the possession of power over the wills of other men. This translated into power in the polis, outside the polis and in relation to other men. This is power which transit from man to man and from one situation to another. One thing about it is that no one possesses it permanently.

One of the elements of 'rounded or oval' nature of power is that it makes a man's behavior political in that he rules and obeys, persuades and compromises, promises and bargains, coerces and represents, fights and fears (Bluhm, 1978). Bluhm further stressed that, vigor being the quality of a good man would be translated to the larger society to make it as good as he desires, through the possession of political power. The society is 'vigor writ-large' and virtue the idea of man, as a social animal, is fulfilled in the company of his fellows which translate to 'some coercive power, to compel men equally to the performance of their covenants, by the terror of some punishment. For men always remain a heart beast of prey, desirous not only of security but of glory and power, which lead them into depredations...a perfectly selfish but rational person will feel compelled to accept in the way of self-limitations, through hope of gain to himself and fear of the consequences of disobedience. This is because covenants, without the sword, are but words (Bluhm, 1978). In the final analysis, the tendency to extend one's vigor or virtue or Latin 'arete' into the

larger society generated the tendency to dominate others in particular, is an element of all human associations, from the family through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations, to the state. Social clubs ...are scenes of continuous struggles for power between groups... who seek to attain greater power as Morgenthau (1973) has said.

The distillation of the above, revealed that political power is the central theme in human society and is required to pull the society together and manage it. It arose from man's desire to be good to himself, and create a society filled with vigor. This translated into 'potere' or power when it became imperative to cause other men to also be good in the society. The capacity 'to be able' (Latin *potere*) to cause all men to align with good intention for the larger society became politics, to make the society better for all. The one elected to administer for all the moral goodness of the society, Thomas Hobbes referred to as the 'sovereign' or the 'leviathan' located somewhere in the commonwealth has the legal agent who has the right to say with final authority what the law is. Such agent is necessarily himself outside the law (Bluhm, 1978). The shape of power is rounded and spherical, this enables power to roll from one person to others who are in political power orbit, like the solar system constellation.

5. GREAT-MEN AND POLITICAL POWER

This part of the study, sought to further elucidate that the shape of political power is round or spherical by presenting past powerful great men in history, who wielded enormous political power in the past, but watch as political power had rolled away from their domain. It is only an object roundly shaped which has the capacity to spool away from such great men.

If political power did not have 'round-spherical shape' which accounted for its rolling or gliding nature, certain great men in history of the world would have retained it permanently. However, no great man in politics in global perspective has retained power permanently. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) founding father of America and author of the declaration of Independence, had power moved away to another person after such great feat. Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), ended Apartheid as a development policy, and created the rainbow nation, elected president, he exceptionally and voluntarily relinquished power. Martin Luther King (1929-1968), he might not have been a president, but wielded enormous political power and influence with which he obtained equality for the people of African-American descent. George Washington (1732-1799), Winston Churchill (1874-1965). Emperor Constantine (272-337) who consolidated the Roman empire and made significant contribution to the Christian faith. Ataturk

(1881-1938), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), and more recently Barack Obama (1961-2016). Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the German politician and leader of the Nazi Party, (if you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed, he who owns the youth, gains the future), great words and philosophy of Hitler. Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini (1883-1945), the leader of the Italian National Fascist Party or Corporatism because it merged the state and corporate power. Power rolled away from these great men.

Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill, army officer and later a British politician and served as Prime Minister 1940- 1945 and 1951-1955. He led the British government to overcome Hitler in the WW II. By 1940, when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain Churchill resigned he replaced him. Churchill formed and led the allied power to successful WW II against the axis power. However, in the election of the following year, Churchill loss and political power rolled away from him through the ballot box.

These men understood power but they were oblivious of its shape and its kinetic nature. However, the common denominator about all these great power wielding men was that political power rolled-in and later moved-away from their domain, many after their dead and yet others while they were still alive. This illustrates the empirical description and explanatory capacity of the rounded shape of political power, and its predictive

ability, that it would sooner or later, roll-off the hands of the current possessors to another. It is therefore absolutely unnecessary, to kill and struggle irrationally for it, because it would glide to where one is, and if one is within the political circular orbit of power, then it may stop at one's location.

The submission of this theoretical construct indicated that, in whatever form that 'power' is manifested and conceptualized, either as a brute force to obtain compliance, as a legitimate 'power' couched in 'authority' obtained by going through the established procedure or through the 'charisma' of one person shown in an exceptional situation, or through 'traditional' or norms, its shape is 'rounded or spherical', and roll when kinetic energy is applied, it move around from one person to the other who are located within the power constellation orbit. The shape of 'power' and authority is therefore round or shaped spherically, this is what enables it to roll away from its possessor to yet another.

6. CONTENTS OF POLITICAL POWER

The contents of political power which gave it shape and rolling nature first of all, arises from the fact that no matter how powerful a political leader may become, he/she never achieved power alone. There is constellation of people in the political power orbit, who would have assisted the other on the understanding that power would be collegiately

organized. When one person would have exercised power for a period, the others in the orbit ignite the kinetic forces for changes and the rolling commences as political discourse or empirical actions.

Secondly, some people could enjoy the backing of prominent social groups, ethnic groups, religious organizations and their adherents, or major corporations and economically prominent families. These groups may require changes in political power when the existing order is considered unjust hence requiring deviations as it is currently being agitated for in Nigeria at the moment, given the menace of the herdsmen, and the seeming complicity of the government.

Thirdly, some may rise to power on the basis of broad popular support, whether through institutionalized election procedures or through some other manifestation of popular will, charisma. When the citizens who were enthused by the charisma hence bestowed power on the possessor, are no longer receiving the value of the power, they would set in motion movements to transfer it elsewhere.

Fourthly, others may gain power through the 'barrel of the guns' military coup d'état. Every military coup gives rise to counter coup and set in motion the rolling of political power.

Fifthly, economic strength transforms into political power. It's a realism that there exists a correlation between economic and political power. Thus, those who

bank-rolled as the acquisition of political power, are certainly seeking changes, in the political order. Economic power is thus, an input factor which set in motion the rolling of political power.

These are the elements which trigger the constancy in the rolling of political power from one domain to the other. These variables are always at work aimed at any locus of political power. It explicates why no strongman has ever been able to retain power permanently.

In the same vein, when power is on the move and its possessor try to halt its movement, which he could do by violating laws and rules temporarily, he translates into a tyrant and act arbitrarily. Even at that, the shape of power causes it to move out of their domain. This was the case with General Abacha in Nigeria, Pinochet in Chile, Stalin in Russia, Adolph Hitler in Germany and many other places in the African continent with its 'strong men syndrome'.

7. CONCLUSION

The exposition of political power derived from Latin '*potere*' or the ability to cause others to do a thing, has shown that it is not the preserve of only one person, because political power right from the Greek city state of Athens, had rolled from one person or group to another. This indicates its rounded shape in nature. An understanding of the shape of political power by its possessors, would make 'good governance' in its use a categorical imperative in any polity, particularly in the third world and

specifically in the African continent.

It stands to reason, that contestants in the political arena ought not to employ unconventional means to its end. Political power generates 'influence' which persist even when one is no longer within the political power circle. This is possible only when governance was 'just, fair, inclusive, transparent and accountable', for the general good of the society.

Drawn from the forgone analysis, no one has retained power perpetually even great men in history. It was against this backdrop that in classical Athens, no one was allowed to hold public office for the second term except the military generals. An understanding of this 'rounded' shape of political power, would generate peaceful political contest but for the nature of man.

It is herein endorsed that in order to have peaceful conduct of politics, all those who step forward to render services to the state, should be trained and made to know the shape of political power, especially in the third world and mostly in Nigeria. They must be made to understand the equation of political power, where in states, 'no matter the size of the military available to one, when 'social justice' is observed in bridge, whether in a mono-ethnic state, political power would start rolling. This is a universal thesis and not context specific'.

In relation to Nigeria, there should be stringent conditions for the registration of political parties.

There should be differences between one political party and the other before they are registered. This is to offer alternative political platforms for people in the third world, and Nigeria specifically.

NOTES

*Elements of good governance - application of the Rule of law, Transparency, responsiveness to the general will of the people, Consensus orientation of the government, Equity and Inclusiveness of all social groups in the state, Effectiveness and Efficiency in responding to the yearning of the people, Accountability and ensuring the Participation of the people in their governance and value addition to society on sustainable basis.

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