

The concept of authority

Authority is the right or official permission to use power to issue commands in order to control the behaviour of the followership. Official permission is granted largely in three ways as follows:

Legal-Rational Authority

This is authority granted to the political elite, for instance, through following the rules in the constitution, the highest law of the country.

Rational authority is derived from the ability of the leadership to make reasoned policy decisions, largely resulting from training in the techniques of decision making. In other words, modern education is vital for rational leadership.

Advantages of legal Rational Authority in Administration

- Rational legal authority ensures conformity by creating a system of rules and procedures by which everyone is bound.
- It gives every person an equal and every chance of taking the leadership role as long as they meet or satisfy the requirements
- Its sets a time period of service. For example a president can only be in office for a period of ten years in two terms.
- It emphasizes educational qualifications to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the leaders
- It applies the principles of the rule of law. In this case, no one is above the law; former presidents have had their immunity lifted before. Even presidents children and Ministers have been taken to the courts before.
- It is often written, hence, leaders can perusal through in case of doubt. For example, the president can use the constitution to ensure that he is operating within the confines of his jurisdiction.
- It sets boundaries of authority. No one can overstep their jurisdiction because of aspects abuse of office or misallocation or misappropriation of funds.
- Authority and property is depersonalized

Disadvantages

- Rules and regulations stifle discretion
- Rules and regulations also lead to delays in decision making (“red tape” and inflexibility)
- Does not retain a high level of legitimacy. For example a leader can be in power despite having more than half or half the people who are against
- some leaders stay in power for a long time (Obiang, equatorial guinea 38; Paul Biya Cameroon 35; Museveni Uganda, 31; Al-Bashir, Sudan, 28; Deby Chad, 27; Afewerki, 24; Nguesso, Congo 20; Abdelaziz Algeria 18; Guelleh Djibouti 18; Kagame Rwanda 17; Kabila DRC 16)

Traditional authority

Traditional authority is granted to those who hold positions of leadership through customary laws, beliefs and practices that have existed in particular communities for a long time. Traditional authority is based on unwritten rules; unwritten rules may be justified by the belief that they have held true since time immemorial. Monarchies, chiefs and head men fall within that category of leadership. In many African countries, some communities are patri-lineal, conferring leadership positions to the male lineage, while matrilineal groups look on the female fork for leadership inheritance.

Traditional authority produces conformity because people view the position and succession of authority as a product of the past and thus as an arrangement that should continue to exist. There is no rational calculation of benefits, simply the recognition that all is as it should be.

Advantages

- It leads to national identity. Chiefs are the custodians of the origin of people. On the national registration card, people are required to provide the details of their chief and village. This helps in reducing changes of illegal registration because the government can verify the origins of people from the chiefs.
- It commands a high level of legitimacy because the leader is accepted by the followership because people share the same beliefs, values and culture.
- It is cheap and cost effective. There are no elections or the recruitment. Not everyone in traditional leadership is paid an allowance or salary. No strike,
- Because it is based on heredity, it ensures continuity of office. It does not involve a power vacuum such as where we have no district commissioner when a new government comes into office.
- Local agents of development. Local leadership involves identification of local problems which can be transmitted to the local district administration.
- People are closer to the chief and headmen than their district administrator who is more delineated due to the social class and artefacts such as houses they live in. The chief may have children or relatives who may have married from the village and hence loyalty is not only based on chiefs position but also because of the family ties.

Disadvantages

- Traditional authority fuses power because the chief is the lawmaker, law interpreter, and law enforcer. In this case, leaders can misuse their powers and it goes against the principles of separation of powers, checks and balances
- This type of authority is based on heredity or lineage to the throne and as such, if a person does not belong to the lineage throne, no matter how educated or learned a person is, they can never take up the leadership roles.
- Traditional leaders sometimes hinder developments because they control 60% of the land mass in Zambia. In some areas, development has been slow because some chiefs do not allow the government to make infrastructural developments.
- Traditional leaders are usually easy ground for corruption and acquisition of land even by foreigners. There are fewer procedures in acquiring traditional land as compared to government land.
- It does not emphasize educational qualifications.
- It does not set a period of service and hence a chief will be in office until the time of his death.

- Followers of a leader will low levels of education who makes embarrassing decisions are shared with its followers.
- Governance is not codified. Traditional authority is based on oracle knowledge as such it is unwritten. Therefore, application of justice is sometimes very inconsistent because different people may be treated different if the oracle remembers something different.

Charismatic authority

Charisma refers to the qualities of those who possess, or are believed to possess, powers of leadership either as a virtue of exceptional personality or derived from some unusual inspiration such as a magical, divine, or diabolical source, powers not possessed by the ordinary person (Weber 1947). Charismatic authority is characterized by certain gifts or talents some individuals may have. For instance, some individuals have a fine, attractive and commanding personality.

Oratory in public speech, or performance in magic or witch-craft or sporting area which makes people marvel at you and become willing and ready to listen to you and do as you would like them to do are other attributes of charisma.

Charismatic authority encourages conformity by convincing group members that the person in the position of authority possesses some unique qualities and the authority should thus be obeyed. Authority of this type exists only as long as the charismatic person exists and with that person's demise the authority simply disappears or may transform into traditional authority passed through a line of successors.

The charismatic leader says "it is written, but I say unto you," as Jesus said. What the charismatic leader says overrides and replaces any written rule. Charismatic authority originates in the extraordinary qualities of the person holding this authority, not in another source, such as the will of the people.

Advantages

- Because it commands a lot of legitimacy, it is easier to implement programmes because the followership believe in the leader (we have seen ladies drink doom in churches because the prophetic powers of their leaders, we have lost relatives who after being told they have been cured of the HIV stop taking ARVs and they die)
- A charismatic leader may capitalize on the claims made for him: he need never explain himself, indeed, there is some advantage in his inexplicability and unpredictability.

Disadvantages

- Charisma often fades with the passage of time, so that sooner or later an individual who attracted attention may lose that impressive following. If the followers lose faith, the leader is left with no power of command. For this reason the charismatic leader's position is precarious. (The image of the charismatic leader depends on a mythology of origins; on the incidents of portents and signs; on exceptional experiences; on his having had the opportunity to assimilate past wisdom; on hearsay stories of stamina, energy, untutored insight, and untrained exceptional abilities.
- A charismatic leader may die, and the followership may be without an equally charismatic successor, resulting in social dis-integration.
- Some leaders have used their charisma for misrule, for instance despotism. The all pervading charismatic authority has frequently proved to be a license for exemption from external moral restraint allowing the charismatic leader to indulge in sexual, financial, or violent excess. Hitler is one reference to such kind of leadership.

- Charismatic leadership is the least stable because it is unpredictable and a leader's commands are often unfathomable (a leader whose inspiration is divine requires faith to understand)

Some people may combine all three aspects of charisma. This may make it easier for them to lead. Others may have only one or two aspects.

Legitimacy and Sovereignty

In governance, legitimacy can be defined as the active feelings of support of by the follower-ship to obey the commands of the leadership. Legitimacy is an important component in governance because the higher the degree of legitimacy the leadership enjoys in the country, the easier the governance activity becomes. A government with a high degree of legitimacy depends less on the use of the coercive apparatus. A high degree of legitimacy is a pre-requisite for social stability in the country. Legitimacy is often viewed as similar to trust, as a resource that regimes have and can employ to gain acceptance of policies.

Categories of Legitimacy

Legitimacy can be classified into categories as follows:

- (i) Political legitimacy and
- (ii) Legal legitimacy

Political legitimacy is the level of support political functionaries such as the president, cabinet ministers, members of parliament and councilors receive from the electorate.

It can be measured by the total number of votes received in an electoral contest, or by the crescendo shown in public acclamation.

Legal legitimacy is the degree of support the leadership receive from the follower-ship as a result of the leadership having fulfilled the requirements of the stipulated laws before assuming their offices. Legal legitimacy, in other words, presupposes that a leader who has followed the prescriptions of the law as a guide towards entry into his office deserves the support and obedience of the follower-ship. This is because the law he has observed, the Electoral Act, for instance, was made by the people in their representative institution, the legislature.

How to Keep Legitimacy Afloat

Like mercury in the thermometer, which changes its reading, depending on the weather situation, political legitimacy is difficult to keep afloat. There are, however, a number of actions the leadership can put in place to keep alive the people's support.

- (i) The Economy

The leadership has to work hard to put in place policies that have to make the economy productive; try to achieve uniform development throughout the country; create jobs and keep prices low. A government achieves legitimacy several ways. At the most elemental level, it must provide security, so that people feel reasonably safe. Many Iraqis complained that, bad as Saddam was, under him they could walk down the street. As Hobbes (see Chapter 2) saw, no security means no legitimacy. Related to security is "rule of law." Regimes that provide

it gain legitimacy. Just existing a long time fosters legitimacy. Citizens generally respect long established governments. The fact that the U.S. Constitution is more than two centuries old confers great legitimacy on the U.S. government. New governments, on the other hand, have shaky legitimacy; their citizens have little or no respect for them.

(ii) National security, unity and social stability

The leadership has to strive hard to inspire all citizens to cultivate the spirit of national-hood, maintain law and order, and create an environment where everyone can move round with a degree of safety and no fear of physical harm to be caused by other citizens. A government gains legitimacy by governing well. Ensuring economic growth and jobs so that people can feed their families builds legitimacy. The government of West Germany, founded in 1949 after defeat in World War II, had little legitimacy at first, but level-headed political leadership with sound economic policies gradually earned the Bonn government legitimacy. On the other hand, the German Weimar Republic that followed World War I faced a series of economic and political catastrophes that undermined its legitimacy and let Hitler take power.

(iii) The pluralist approach to governance

While being permitted to apply the elitist guidance to governance in critical situations, the leadership should try hard to apply the inclusive, participatory, consultative approach to governance. As already observed in the preceding lecture, collective governance gives rise to collective responsibility to keep the system safe and smooth running. The structure of government contributes to its legitimacy. If people feel they are fairly represented and have a say in the selection of their officials, they are more likely to obey. Finally, governments shore up their legitimacy by national symbols. The flag, historic monuments, patriotic parades, and ringing speeches aim at convincing people that the government is legitimate and should be obeyed.

Test 1

1. Differentiate between an Act and a Law
2. How is legal rational authority and legal legitimacy different but similar

Sovereignty and Governance

Sovereignty is the supreme claim of jurisdiction and freedom of a state to run its affairs as it sees fit. Sovereignty (from the Old French “to rule over”) originally meant the power of a monarch over his or her kingdom. Later, the term broadened to mean national control over the country’s territory, boss of one’s own turf. Nations safeguard their sovereignty. They maintain armies to deter foreign invasion and they control their borders with passports and visas.

Attributes of sovereignty

There several attributes or factors of sovereignty, but the principal ones are as follows:

A. Territory or Land

Governance takes place over a certain piece of land with a particular name. In this country, that piece of land is known as Zambia. It has a total land mass ofsquare kilometres. Both the political and civil elite in this country claim ownership and freedom to run the affairs according to their interest over this land mass.

B. Land Mass and the People

Governance is exercised over a group of people occupying a certain land mass. According to the recent head count, there are around 13.5 million people in Zambia. This is the group that is subject to the commands of

the governing elite. This is the group that is referred to as *Zambians*, a group that votes to grant electoral mandate to the elite to give direction about conducting affairs in this country.

C. International Recognition

Sovereignty has meaning when other countries recognize the existence of another country as being independent and free to govern itself. Both close and distant country neighbours of Zambia need to respect our political boundaries and accept us as a country community. This is one of the reasons for Zambia's membership to the African Union and the United Nations as larger political unions that confer recognition of the sovereignty of member states.

Symbols of Sovereignty

There are certain symbols that indicate a country's sovereign status.

1. **The National Anthem**

The first symbol of sovereignty is the national anthem. It is sung at important occasions to recognize the existence of Zambia as an independent state. When Zambia participates in international games our National Anthem, just like other countries' National Anthems, to recognize their sovereign status, will be played.

2. National flag

Another symbol of sovereignty is the National Flag. It is flown at embassies, at the Nations and at important national and international gatherings to show recognition of the existence of sovereign nations around the world. The preceding observations show that sovereignty is an integral and crucially important component of governance.

Irredentism and Sovereignty

Irredentism is a situation where one country does not accept or respect the demarcated border with its neighbour. There have been such border disputes between Somalia and Kenya, Between Somalia and Ethiopia, between Kenya and Uganda and between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Causes of Irredentism in Africa

- **Historical Legacy and demographic overlap**

The disingenuous manner with which most modern African states were created by the colonial powers have been a major factor responsible for the recrudescence of irredentism in Africa. The territorial borders abutting the different African states tend to overlap from one country to the other. The conflicts or frictions then come in when each of these countries, due to a myriad of reasons, tries to delineate the extent of their territories. The result of this is that members of the same ethnic stock are often to be found as citizens of different countries. In the event of members of a particular ethnic group being subjected to ethnic marginalization because of being a minority group in a particular country, members of their ethnic group in a neighbouring country, who constitute a majority, may feel duty-bound, as a matter of moral obligation to pursue an irredentist agenda in order to liberate their "brethren".

- **Economic Consideration:**

The unequal and uneven dispersion of natural resources in Africa is also a major factor in the frequent outbreak of irredentism in Africa. Its neighbour's i.e. Burundi, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia and Angola then used the pretext of trying to stabilize Congo in interfering in Congolese politics and at the same time quartering some of the natural resource-rich provinces within the Congo as being an appendage of the 'stabilizer' country(s).

How are legitimacy, sovereignty, and authority different but similar?

In short, legitimacy means respect for a government; sovereignty, respect for a country; and authority, respect for a leader. None are automatic; all must be earned. Where you find one, you find the others. Where one erodes, so usually do the others.