

Max weber's forms of authority: three case studies

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According to Max Weber, there are three fundamental types of authority: traditional authority which is passed from generation to generation by virtue of custom; charismatic authority which is gained and maintained chiefly by the leader's personal qualities; legal authority which is founded on juridical, "rationally devised rules" (Weber, 1994, p.

312). This paper looks at three leaders each of whom was found to conform to one of these types defined by Weber. Each of the three case studies will include reasons as to why this particular leader falls under this particular type. In addition, each case study will include several remarks concerning public reaction to the rule of these leaders. Name of leader: Elizabeth II Era: 20th century (1952 - present) Although formally the head of state, Queen Elizabeth II does not perform any important governmental functions, because the real executive power lies with Prime Minister and his Cabinet, while the Parliament is the Supreme legislative body.

The Queen is thus a nation-unifying figurehead, making state visits, holding meetings with important political figures and signing acts of Parliament. Still, the monarch adheres to all such formalities without any ability for genuinely significant decision-making ("The Role of the Monarchy", n. d.). The type of the Queen's authority is clearly the traditional one. Elizabeth II became ruler of the United Kingdom by means of succession from her father George VI.

It is a process typical for a monarchy, and in the UK, monarchy is the oldest traditional form of government. Elizabeth II did not become Queen due to her personal merits &ndsh; she was simply the King's daughter and thus the heir to the throne. Public opinion of the Queen has largely been positive, with

some weak points, as in 1997 when she did not participate in a “ public outpouring of grief” over Princess Diana’s death. In a poll conducted by The Sunday Telegraph she has been voted Britain’s favorite monarch. Name of leader: Napoleon Bonaparte Era: 19th century (1804 - 1815) In the course of his decade-long reign as an emperor of France, Napoleon conquered most of Western Europe and brought glory for his country. He supervised the highly-influential Civil Code, a clearly-written document asserting personal liberties, which was adopted by many states all over the world.

France admired Napoleon, while the enemy feared him. Much of his fame was due to a highly effective propaganda policy in newspapers and theater, which he shaped in order to “ promote the precise image he desired” (“ Napoleon I”, 2012). Napoleon was not an emperor by right of birth, it was a title he chose for himself at the height of his career. Napoleon was largely a self-made man, having risen from lieutenant to the ruler of Europe’s most powerful state by virtue of his military talent and charisma, without any background either in nobility or state bureaucracy. Due to his strategic genius and personal magnetism, Napoleon was adored by the French and became a cultural icon. Keeping his ideas in line with the ideals of the French Revolution, he maintained strong popular support.

In fact, even after he had been imprisoned in Italy in 1815, he managed to eescape and gather forces once again for his final battle at Waterloo where he was defeated and exiled to the island of Saint Helena. Name of leader: George W. Bush Era: 21st century (2001 - 2009) Being a true Republican, 43rd US President George W. Bush adhered to a conservative, welfare-oriented course of action dubbed “ compassionate conservatism”, while in <https://assignbuster.com/max-webers-forms-of-authority-three-case-studies/>

foreign affairs he advocated a strongly interventionist policy directed against several Middle Eastern countries. The 9/11 attacks were a strong pretext for the War on Terror, and eventually Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as several others, were invaded by NATO forces. Naturally, Bush was not a universally popular figure.

He became president by a tiny margin as the decisions of his administration often met with significant opposition (" George W. Bush", n. d.). George W.

Bush's authority definitely belongs to the legal type. Although his personal charisma had a direct influence on his rise to power, Bush became president after legally winning the presidential election of 2001 as the Republican Party candidate, thus assuming the post on a formal, legal basis. Bush's presidency was replete with scandals and controversies, but nevertheless he managed to be elected for the second time, winning the 2004 election by a 2.5% margin. The nationwide outrage against terrorism was one of the primary factors that held the country together at that time and made it elect Bush for his second term. There were also such popular policies as the healthcare, education and social security programs as well as the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003.