

# Power in politics



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## The equipoise of power: The King and the King maker

*“ Power is a complex strategic situation in a given social setting”*

-Michel Foucault

*Introduction:*

Power can exist at many levels, from interpersonal relationships to governmental positions. It is a research paper on power in politics which elucidates the potential of power to affect or control society. While most citizens are free to run for political office, realistically few can. The common labourer, for example, is restricted by his or her inability to be absent from work to campaign actively. Other individuals may be restricted by the fact that they are members of a known powerless group: society's prejudices and stigma will keep them from being elected. Typically and understandably, elected officials often desire to use their status to facilitate their position and to maintain their wealth and power. They will further the causes and interests of their particular group, rather than addressing the concerns of the masses.

John Stuart Mill proposed the *“ Power elite model”*, which suggests that a small group of powerful people make almost all the important decisions in the United States. Those people in power are primarily individuals within the federal government, including the president and cabinet, and executives who run the top corporations in the United States. Thus, the individuals who have benefitted most from capitalism are in control of the general populace.

Every facet of the society is colossally leveraged by multifarious assemblages of power. However diverse the fountainhead of power may be, it entails the single point aspiration to achieve legitimacy. Although political science borrows heavily from the other social sciences, it is distinguished from them by its focus on power defined as, “ *The ability of one political actor to get another actor to do what it wants at the international, national, and local levels*” . J. K. Galbraith summarizes the types of power as being *Coercive* (based on force), *Compensatory* (through the use of various resources) or *Conditioned* (the result of persuasion) and their sources as *Personality* (individuals) *Property* (their material resources) and *Organizational* (an organisational power structure). It is the interplay between them that determines the equipoise of power dynamics.

Historically the term kingmaker implied person or group that had great influence in a royal or political succession, without being a viable candidate. Originally, the term applied to the activities of Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick “ *Warwick the Kingmaker*” . By analogy, The term though always unofficial, has tended to gain more importance in places of power struggle for example, politics, sports organizations etc. Consequently, bestowment of such a title is looked upon significantly and more often as a means of indirect gratification for individuals wanting to silently dictate the affairs of the organization. The term is also occasionally used in a pejorative sense during elections, where a small number of independent political candidates who hold a sizable sway in the ‘ vote bank’, can most likely decide the course of an outcome.

The influence of the religious orders like the Roman Catholic Church in running the affairs of the state during medieval times (through the King) is a well-known example. Kingdoms and empires in the Indian sub-continent often relied on their religious heads. Besides religious orders, even countries can fit into this terminology when they can dictate the affairs of the other country (either directly or indirectly). In current political scenarios across the world the term can expand its scope to include powerful lobbying groups, whose role is often seen as a defining factor on major issues.

### *Literature Review:*

The literature on political power is voluminous and has been a riveting subject matter for many political philosophers. There have been extensive discussions on power beset with definitional contradictions effectuating a broad range of justificatory themes. Ancient authors conjectured the interactions between charismatic power and plutocratic rule as a natural subject of confabulation. Thus, justifying plutocracy as a victimless crime raises serious questions about the legitimacy of charismatic power and crony capitalist docket in distinct economic topographies. Keith Dowding in his book '*Power*' illustrated the Rational choice theory whereby human individuals or groups can be modelled as 'actors' who choose from a 'choice set' of possible actions in order to try to achieve desired outcomes.

In the Marxist tradition, the Italian writer Antonio Gramsci elaborated the role of ideology in creating a cultural hegemony, which incubates the power of capitalism and of the nation-state. While Gramsci stresses the significance of ideology in power structures, Marxist- feminist writers such as Michele

Barrett stress the role of ideologies in extolling the virtues of family life. The classic argument to illustrate this point of view is the use of women as a 'reserve army of labour'. For Foucault real power will always rely on the ignorance of its agents; with the discovery and emergence of Bio-power, and Bio-politics a biological and political technology of its population, highlights this fact.

Alvin Toffler's radical work '*Powershift*' argues that the three main kinds of power are violence, wealth, and knowledge with other kinds of power are only variations of these three (typically knowledge). Toffler argues that the very nature of power is currently shifting. Throughout history, power has often shifted from one group to another; however, at this time, the dominant form of power is changing. During the Industrial Revolution, power shifted from nobility acting primarily through violence to industrialists and financiers acting through wealth. Of course, the nobility used wealth just as the industrial elite used violence, but the dominant form of power shifted from violence to wealth. According to Toffler, today a Third wave of shift is taking place with wealth being overtaken by knowledge.

*Hypothesis:* There is a positive relationship entailing the constellation of power dynamics in the hands of charismatic political leaders.

*To validate the above hypothesis the paper will adopt the following objectives:*

1. To elucidate the pre-requisites of a charismatic political leader as the King or Kingmaker.

2. To extrapolate the power dynamics between the King and the Kingmaker by interpolating Economic theories.

### *Research Methodology:*

This analytical paper intends to apply embrasive theoretical doctrines to educe quantitative inferences and according validate the paper's hypothesis. In itsfirst objectivethe paper aims at elucidating the evolutionary discourse of Charismatic power, through compendious extrapolation of literature explicating the extant political doctrines' in each era. Empirical and anecdotal examples will be considered to evince rationality of the theories. Thesecond objectiveintends to extrapolate the complexities entailing the various power structures in a society. It will elucidate the power sharing dynamics between the king and the king makers along the contours of history by interpolating apposite economic theories to analyse the coherence of the vectors of power. The paper will also delve deeper to analyse power through other numerous derivations of collusive power sharing theories of oligopolistic, monopolistic and monopsonistic market structures by interpreting their occurrence in a political scenario.

### *Main Analysis:*

- *The pre-requisites of a charismatic political leader as the King or Kingmaker.*

Charismatic power academically typo graphed as “ Referent power” is the power or ability of individuals to attract others and build loyalty. It is based on the charisma and interpersonal skills of the power holder. A person may be admired because of specific personal trait, and this admiration creates

the opportunity for interpersonal influence. Here the person under power desires to identify with these personal qualities, and gains satisfaction from being an accepted follower. Even nationalism and patriotism account for an intangible sort of referent power. Advertisers too have long used the referent power of public figures for products endorsements. The charisma of an individual may elevate him to a consequential position in society, this status can then be either used or abused to one's advantage. An individual may assume the role of a supreme political leader or the chief advisor in the garb of a de facto leader commonly referred to as the " Godfather". Abuse of power is imminent when an affable mass leader is pedestaled to power, yet lacks integrity and honesty.

- *Extrapolating power dynamics through Economic theories.*

Game theory with its foundations in the *Walrasian theory* of ' Rational Choice' is an efficacious mechanism to arbitrate the equilibration of power. In rational choice theory, human individuals or groups can be modelled as ' actors' who choose from a ' choice set' of possible actions in order to try to achieve desired outcomes. An actor's ' incentive structure' encompasses the costs associated with different actions in the choice set, and the likelihoods that different actions will lead to desired outcomes. In game theory, the kingmaker is a player who lacks sufficient resources or position to win at a given game, but possesses enough remaining resources to decide which of the remaining viable players will eventually win. The kingmaker indirectly manipulates the discourse of the game to suite his needs, thus becoming a de facto King.

Political history is replete with such Kingmakers who run the show behind the curtains in the name of the King, however the equipoise power has constantly evolved. While the Tamil leader Kamaraj was instrumental in making Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi the Prime Ministers of India in 1964 and 1966 resp. Dick Morris literally orchestrated the gubernatorial and presidential elections of Bill Clinton. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi was openly referred as the de facto Prime Minister of India on numerous occasions. And speculators have already crowned Amit Shah the kingmaker of the BJP lead Narendra Modi government. The corporate world thrives on this collusive nexus of power. Contemporary politics has been dominated by the elite corporate bosses and industrialist ensuing the role of a Kingmaker. These elite formations of oligopolistic power structures have desolated the welfare policies of India. Thus, the monopsonist pattern of give and take in Indian politics has fostered the foundations of plutocracy.

*Conclusion:*

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