

Is Political Legitimacy Compatible with Structural Dominations?

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Monarchy with legitimacy is better than democracy without legitimacy

Introduction

Political legitimacy is commonly the spirit of the moral right of political right and defined as it can be secured when it promises freedom of equality. Modern political philosophies lost its soul from metaphysical and theological foundations that seem to be rooted into the procedural justification, democratic consents as well as public reasons. According to John Rawls government action is said to be legitimate if it is based on the actions, that is, when all reasonable citizens could theoretically explain the necessities regardless of their personal religion or moral belief. Yet, this faces the persistence challenges: the contemporary democratic state is said to be legitimate if it continues to reproduce deep as well as the durable form of social, economic and bureaucratic dimensions. But these forms of domination raise fundamental questions for political philosophy.

The central question of this essay is whether political legitimacy can be sustained in the presence of domination. To be more precise that it is able to satisfy prerequisites of democratic authorisation, legality and public justification or legitimacy be thought in light of non-coercive and structural form of domination by Marxism, Republican or Foucauldian traditions.

This essay portrays a standard liberal account that political legitimacy is not sufficient to that extent because it is treated as the domination of distributive & social injustice. Moreover, consent, legality and public reasons are the necessary conditions of legitimacy but we can not say that they are sufficient too. However, rather than concluding legitimacy as impossible under modern conditions, it should be graded and structural property. Thus political legitimacy depends not only on procedural authorisation but also on a political system's institutional capacity.

In this essay we will understand the arguments proceeds in five stages. First, classical and liberal accounts of legitimacy that focus on Weber and Rawls. Second, the concept of structural dominations through Marxism, Foucauldian and Republican perspectives. Third, we will evaluate whether domination undermines legitimacy, critically engaging liberal responses. The fourth section will present major objectives and finally the fifth section will address a positive response for the theory of legitimacy compatible with structural critiques.

Keywords- Political Legitimacy, Structural domination, Liberal accounts, graded legitimacy, critiques

Classical and liberal account of political legitimacy-

Max Weber's analysis of legitimacy is considered as the foundation for the modern political theory; he defined legitimacy not merely as an objective moral truth but as belief (Legitimitataglaube) in validity of authority. Domination (Herrschaft) is proved to be stable when subject regards binding, it may be either due to charism, tradition or legal authority. But this account of Weber may be proven to be sociologically powerful but it is typically thin and void. It lights how authority maintained but it does not reflect morally synchronised; a regime may legitimate in his sense but deeply oppressive. Consequently, his framework can't explain moral states but it only describes acceptances.

Normative political philosophy therefore turns to be liberal theories that highlight legitimacy as justification rather than beliefs. John Rawls highlights it as the constitution that lights the principles and ideas to the human reasons & temperaments. Therefore, it is secured through public reasons, constitutional essentials and democratic procedures. Rawls's model strength is to avoid authoritarian, perfectionism, respect moral pluralism and at the time it provides an account of political obligations.

Though, he devoid many background social and economic inequalities and treated them as distributive justice rather than consider them as legitimacy. Therefore, by promoting "background justice" he argued that political authority would become legitimate as long as constitutional procedures and principles are focused.

This proceduralisation of legitimacy seems problematic because most of the time it focuses on formal equality & public justification and liberal legitimacy is abstract from social conditions. Citizens are sufficiently free and equal to authorise political power without addressing structural inequality.

Structural domination beyond coercion-

To find out whether "domination undermines legitimacy" it is first obvious to make sure "what is structural domination?" Domination is not direct coercion or any legal oppression, rather it is social arrangement that is systematically under power of others though without intention of any harm.

Karl Marx's critique of capitalism portrays the early account of domination. Marx argued that labours are formally free and legally equal, yet it is materially compelled to sell their labour. Thus here domination is economic necessity rather than direct force. Therefore, this domination is structural, here no single agent is dominating.

Michel Foucault radicalised these insights by criticising the view that "power is primarily located in sovereign commands." Domination is something that is invisible, operating through knowledge, expertise and administration rationality. It also functions within a liberal legal framework suggesting legality and domination not mutually exclusive.

Republican political theory, the famous work of Philip Pettit presents a dimension of a normative vocabulary for the problem of domination and legitimacy. Pettit defines domination as the capacity of one's agent to interfere arbitrarily; the choice of others: thus a person may be dominated if interference never occurs.

This applied to other political institutions as well non interference and protection are not sufficient if citizens remain vulnerable.

Therefore, on the above three philosophical arguments we converged to a point that- “domination can exist without any coercion, legal inequality or explicit injustice rather it is systematic. It is normalised and compatible with the procedures of democracy.

Does structural domination undermine political legitimacy?

The core normative question is whether structural domination merely represents failure of social justice or undermines political legitimacy itself. Liberal theorists treat domination as former. Therefore, injustice calls for reforms or redistribution but not state’s moral right to rule.

However, this difference between justice and legitimacy is difficult to sustain. Political legitimacy presupposes the fact that citizens are subject to political power. Yet structural dominations prove to be meaningful if it has consent. Hence, the political choices can’t be regarded as fully voluntary if the individual’s economic, security and social standing is constrained.

However, democratic procedures can not themselves be distorted by dominations. Let’s illustrate with example Economic inequality translated into unequal political consequences, even if formal rights are equal. Therefore democratic authorisation has the risk of domination.

According to John Rawls legitimacy is coercive law but not fairness of all social arrangements. The legitimacy holds till constitutional souls are justified publically. However, this portrays a sharp distinction between social and political power.

Foucault and other critics of this theory highlight that social structure, administration practices and economic dependencies are prerequisite for modern political power as well as for political legitimacy. Therefore if political power relies on these structures, then domination can not be external legitimate.

Habermas’s deliberative model often reflects promising and highlights the fact by focusing on the communication power and deliberation. Thus the structural domination is one that signifies who can speak, who is heard and who publicly counts. The conclusion arises is that structural domination undermines political legitimacy criticising its core normative commitment.

Objections & Replies-

A common objection that is to be set is that asymmetries that are required for all political power: “if legitimacy requires the absence of domination, then no modern states could qualify it.”

The first reply is, legitimacy need not to be all-or-nothing. Just like a political party can be more or less just, they can be more or less legitimate too. The second reply holds that democratic setup provides a mechanism for correcting domination of democratic principles like election, rights and judicial review allowing citizens to be morally more powerful.

If this is partially true then how structural domination shapes every mechanism of political legitimacy and at the same time if the domination distorts participation then how democratic principles became self limiting and can't fully secure legitimacy.

Towards a graded and structural theory of legitimacy-

In light of the above problem, this essay also proposes a revised as well as well developed concept of political legitimacy. That is, it must be the procedural, structural and dynamic property of political systems.

First, legitimacy remains procedural. It is so because legality, consent and public justification are dispensable if anyone lacks arbitral political power. Epistemic proceduralism like David Estland's version adds the proposition that procedures should track truth better than change.

Second, legitimacy is structural. Domination must not be systematically produced by political authority, this does not eliminate all inequality that requires safeguard against arbitrary power, exclusion, immortality, illegality and dependency.

Third, legitimacy is dynamic. Here dynamic means no political power is fully legitimate. It will depend on a system's capacity for self critique and responsiveness to domination when it arises.

Therefore this reconceptualisation of legitimacy insights the liberal legitimacy while explaining republican and continental theories. It make a good relation with lived realities and at the same time it also evolved to avoid domination as normatively

Irrelevant.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this essay highlights that political legitimacy can not be adequately known without confronting structural domination. The philosophers dealing with normatively sophisticated insufficiently address the procedures thus in this way power operates through social and economic structures, while the structural dominations undermines the condition of consent, equality as well as non-arbitrariness.

Therefore, rather than abandoning legitimacy as an obsolete idea, this essay tries to convince a graded and conception justification to contest domination. This reconceptualisation of political legitimacy not only bridges analytic and continental traditions but also it seems to be a more realistic and critical framework for contemporary societies. Therefore political legitimacy on this view is not only static morality but also it is an ongoing political task.

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