

Assess how far there is or isn't a distinction between authority and power.

The first main point to raise in this discussion is can the two exist independently, without each other if you were to have total control of the state. It is hard to distinguish between the two as a result, as they are so dependent on one and other.

However, Rousseau (1712 - 1778) would disagree with this. He claims that authority is dependent on power to work, but power does not have to rely on authority to work, as there is no moral obligation to obey a government based on force (power) as it is able to coerce people into it.

Conservatism also favours power, and sees it as more essential than authority, as it believes that with power comes authority just as Rousseau argued. According to conservatism the authority of the state originates from custom and tradition, and is therefore very reluctant to change out-of-date theories of legitimacy. As it is traditional, it is also therefore adopts an authoritarian principle.

But where does the state's authority and power derive from, it is the strongest who rule. The ability to use force compels obedience from the state people. It has been seen many times in history that when the power fails, the state ultimately collapses.

Power is basically the ability to make things happen concerning both political and social areas, and means people getting to do what you want them to. It can be achieved by physical force, which leads to the people being coerced have their independent ability to act overridden.

Power established by and relying on just pure physical force will more than likely be resisted at the most earliest opportunity, as imposing on a resentful population doesn't appear safe for a ruler in the long term. The ruler would have to introduce something positive to their subjects, such as social contract which would therefore give the ruler authority.

This is because they would be giving the population protection through their power. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) claims in *Leviathan* that previous to a social contract, that people lived in a state of nature and every person was out for themselves. With a ruler who has authority with power they are able to provide protection to the population.

The main distinction here between authority and power is that with authority comes a certain respect for the ruler, but power doesn't necessarily give respect - but more of a fear of the ruler's wrath.

Therefore authority needs power, but without authority power relies on force alone, which will most likely fail to work in the long run.

The distinction between the two is fairly great, power is just the ability to coerce populations into doing something by pure force, but authority, exercised by legality, is lawful and willingly accepted by the population.

But it can be argued that authority is often exploited via loopholes in laws, or by political mistakes. An example of this could be Weimar Germany where Hitler was allowed by the Weimar government to pass any law he wanted without it going to the vote in the Reichstag. So both of the two could be exploited for the ruler's own benefits if they were allowed to.

Another example of exploitation of authority is divine right. The sovereign was believed to be given their position in power by the grace of God, ("The powers that are ordained of God") therefore people who rebelled against the state, in a fit of anarchy, were believed to have been damned. Combined with the nation's armed forces as their power the two are not dissimilar to each other in such an example that was common place 500 years ago.

Therefore, authority and power can be considered both dissimilar or similar to each other depending on the situation. If a ruler relies on power, but leads a discontent population, then authority will not necessarily follow on as Rousseau claimed.

The Tories of the late 18th century and early 19th century found this to be very much the case. But authority will always depend on power to exist. The two can be exploited to the benefit of a dictating leader, but power plays a more important role in this than authority. The distinction between authority and power therefore depends, as said before, on the situation