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Destructive or Creative Force of Power and Influence
(Voluntariness instead of Fear and Obedience)

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A – Research concept and design, B – Collection and/or assembly of data, C – Data analysis and interpretation, D – Writing the article, E – Critical revision of the article, F – Final approval of article

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of the article is to present the experience gained by the Polish Military Contingent in Iraq in the field of logistic support and preparation of military equipment. An additional goal is to present how the process of technical security of the Polish Armed Forces outside the country has evolved.

Methods: The aim of the article is to present the experience gained by the Polish Military Contingent in Iraq in the field of logistic support and preparation of military equipment. An additional goal is to present how the process of technical security of the Polish Armed Forces outside the country has evolved.

Results: Statements and concepts of the phenomenon of power and the phenomenon of influence from ancient times to the present have been derived and systematized, positive and negative effects accompanying the two phenomena in social human life have been indicated, with an emphasis on the management of people and resources.

Conclusions: Statements and concepts of the phenomenon of power and the phenomenon of influence from ancient times to the present have been derived and systematized, positive and negative effects accompanying the two phenomena in social human life have been indicated, with an emphasis on the management of people and resources.

Introduction

Throughout the whole human history, people have been fascinated by power. In ancient China the power is clearly expressed through terms such as „the power of light", „the power of darkness", „the power of the natural elements", „the power of the unknown, the void" (Gibson, 2012), etc. Early Christian religion also contains numerous references to the possession or acquisition of power. Ancient philosophers also paid attention to the nature and content of power. For the Romans, power referred to the possibility or ability of one person or thing to influence another person or thing. The subject of scientific research in this article is the problem of power and influence, emphasizing their destructive, educational and constructive power. The main idea of the article is to show the possibility and necessity of accepting the concept of „voluntariness instead of fear and obedience" in modern human society and modern human professional and personal life.

The scientific methodology used is a combination of an etymological review of the considered phenomena of power and influence, content analysis, historical review, meta-analysis of primary scientific data, combined with a critical scientific review and presentation of the latest scientific opinions regarding the phenomena of power and influence. Statements and concepts of the phenomenon of power and the phenomenon of influence from ancient times to the present have been derived and systematized, positive and negative effects accompanying the two phenomena in social human life have been indicated, with an emphasis on the management of people and resources.

1. Power and Influence – Origins, Nature, Concepts and Effects

Explanations of the power phenomenon in human behaviour can be sought in different directions. In a broad meaning of the word, power is the monopoly of its subject over the causes of a given result in the object, or it is the privilege of causing. In a narrow sense of meaning of the word, as a component of social relations, power is „a subjective dependence, a dependence on the arbitrariness of another's will" (Ivanov, 1985, pp. 126–127). In power, what is sufficient for the subject of power is taken away from the object.

The concept of power is useful for understanding how people can influence each other in organizations because it involves the ability of one party (the agent) to influence another party (the target). Power includes the rights, powers, duties, and responsibilities associated with certain positions in an organization or social system. A manager's authority usually includes the right to make certain types of decisions about the organization. A controller with direct authority over the target has the right to make requests consistent with that authority, and the target is required to obey (Yukl, 2013). The larger an organization, the more centres of power exist within it. The power may derive from formal sources or informal sources such as the possession of valuable resources, knowledge, skills, qualifications, etc. (Nikolova, 2023, pp. 101–109).

Whenever people come together in an organization, their activities must be directed and controlled so that they can work together to achieve their common goal. Power, namely the ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do something they would not otherwise do, is the basic tool of directing and controlling organizational goals and activities.

Furthermore, power is „an ability to influence others" (Handgraaf, et al., 2008, pp. 1136–1149) and „a management ability to influence others even when they try to resist that influence." (American Psychological Association, 2020).

The power has the following characteristics (Gibson, 2012):

– it is determined by a person's position, not by the possession of any specific personal characteristics;
– the individual exercises power because he has a legal right;
– authority is exercised vertically and flows from the top down in the organization's hierarchy.

In political science, power is a social production of an effect that determines the capacities, actions, beliefs, or behaviours of actors. Power can take structural forms as it arranges actors in relation to one another (such as distinguishing between master and enslaved person, employer and employees, parent and child, political representatives and their constituents, etc.) and discursive forms which can give legitimacy to some behaviours (Barnett, M.; Duvall, R., 2005, pp. 39–75.).

Some scientists point out that the problem of power is encoded in the human organism, for this question relates to the law of preservation of life, to the law of preservation of the species, i.e. power is viewed through the bio-genetic perspective.

The etymological review of the origin and meaning of the word power leads us to the 1300s, when the word had the meaning of „ability; ability to act or act; strength, vigour, power, especially in battle; efficacy; control, dominion, ability or right to command or control; legal authority; permission; military force, army". It comes from the Anglo-French word „pouair" – „to be able", and from Latin word – „potis" – „powerful; master". The meaning of „one who has power, person of authority, or person who exercises great influence in a community" is from the late 14th century, and the meaning – „a particular ability or capacity" dates from the early 15th century. The meaning „means of modifying other things" is from the 1590s (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001–2022).

According to Cambridge Dictionary, power is (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022):

– an ability to control people and events;
– a political control that a person or group has in a country;
– a natural skill or ability to do something;
– a person, organization, or state that has control over others, often because of wealth, importance, or military power;
– to act with force or in a violent manner;
– an ability or right to control people and events or to influence the way people act or think.

Throughout its evolution, human society has been drawn to the idea of power and influence over people, resources, and the environment.

Early Christian religion also contains numerous references to the possession or acquisition of power. The Bible, Romans 13:1, states: „Everyone must submit to the superior

authorities, for there is no authority that has not been given by God, and those who now rule have been appointed by God" (Bible, 2024). In relation to authority, in the Bible, Peter 2:13-17, states (Bible, 2024):

„Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to all human authority, whether to the king as supreme ruler, it was to the governors as messengers from him to punish the evil-doers and to praise the good-doers. For it is the will of God, by doing good, that you shut the mouths of ignorant and foolish men; as free, however, not using freedom as a cover for evil, but as God's servants. Honor all; love brotherhood; fear God, honour the king."

Ancient philosophers defined the nature and content of power differently. Socrates associated power with inner human strength. For the Romans, power referred to the possibility or ability of one person or thing to influence another person or thing.

In The Republic, Plato analysed the socio-political relations and power, proposing a model for an ideal state (Peev, 2000, p. 297). In Politics and Athenian Politia Aristotle distinguished two types of power: power over unequals – the master's power, the power of the man over the woman, of the father over the children, of the free citizen over the slave and power over equals – the political power (civil power), power in the polis, i.e. the power in the state. According to him, the master's power and the political power are not identical, because the first is power over unequals, and the second is power over free and equal citizens (Peev, 2000, p. 369).

Thomas Hobbes defined power as man's present means of obtaining some future apparent good. According to him the power is like the relation between cause and effect, between an active assertive agent and a passive victim, and the desire for power ends only with our death (Peev, 2000, p. 369).

Maximilian Weber used a broader concept to denote the power phenomenon as „the possibility for a person or a group of people to impose their own will in directing a social action, even in the face of resistance from other participants in it" (Weber, 1992). Therefore, power can be defined as „an interpersonal relationship in which one individual (or group) has the ability to cause another individual (or group) to take an action that would not otherwise be taken" (Rice University, 2019). In other words, power involves the ability of one person to change the behaviour of another.

Weber used a term for dominance, which according to him was a special case of power. Defining power as a command relationship exercised by right, he understood the latter as the object of management. Weber had distinguished a power by virtue of a configuration of interests and a personal command power and as the prototype of the latter he indicated the power of the master at home, official power and royal power. He emphasized the close relationship between domination and economics: „The pursuit of economic interests and the disposal of economic goods is, if not the exclusive purpose of the possession of power, at any rate its usual desirable consequence, and the pursuit of power is an independent motive of human activity, in particular other than the pursuit of profit" (Weber, 1992). According to Bertrand Russell, „power, along with fame, remains the highest aspiration of mankind" (Peev, 2000, p. 369).

Friedrich Nietzsche spread his ideas about the will and the desire for power, which he saw as dominating both other people and exerting control over the environment. According to Nietzsche, power is a struggle for existence, in which the aggressive and cunning win because of their ability to adapt (Granier, 2000). At the beginning of its formation and manifestation, this impulse manifests in man as power over himself, and its highest form manifests itself as power over others.

The phrase „Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." was first uttered by John Emmerich Edward Dahlberg Acton, who warned that power was inherently evil and its holders were not to be trusted (Bauer and Erdogan, 2012). Some scholars claim that the phrase belongs to Charles Montesquieu, a French Enlightenment thinker who lived and worked in the period 1689-1755. The famous phrase is often presented in literature using various nuances of the nature of power, but whatever its exact translation, the message of something being ethically evil remains. John Acton was a fierce opponent of the idea of unlimited power, even if it was the unlimited power of the people (Peev, 2000, p. 311). According to Kostov, there is a unified breakthrough in Acton's maxim, and it is the assertion that God has absolute power, but it is an expression of His love and justice (Kostov, 2024).

In 1959, John French and Bertram Raven developed a sources-of-power scheme to analyse how power works (or doesn't work) in a particular relationship. According to French and Raven, the power is to be distinguished from influence as follows: power is that state of affairs maintained in a relationship, A-B, such that an attempt by A to influence B brings about the change in B desired by A more likely. Understood in this way, power is fundamentally relative and depends on the particular understandings that A and B apply to their relationship. (French & Raven, 1959, pp. 259–269) Here, to some extent, the concept of free will and desire appears, according to which one person has power over another because the second has voluntarily given the first that power. We can also describe another nuance of reasoning on this dilemma, namely – a person A has power over another person B if person B believes that person A can actually force person B to obey.

Gene Sharp believes that power ultimately depends on its foundations. Thus, a political regime maintains power because people accept and obey its dictates, laws, and policies. Sharp argues that power is not monolithic, that is, it does not derive from some inherent quality of those in power. For Sharp, political power, the power of any state, ultimately derives from the stat's subjects. His basic belief is that any power structure relies on the subjects obeying the orders of the ruler(s), and if the subjects do not obey, the rulers will have no power (Sharp, 2010).

According to Gerald Salancik and Jeffrey Pfeffer, power is simply the ability to get things done the way you want them done (Bauer and Erdogan, 2012). It is also the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get what you want.

According to Michael Armstrong, power should be based on cooperation, not obedience and threats (Armstrong, 1993, p. 76.).

Björn Krauss deals with the epistemological perspective of power on the question of possibilities for interpersonal influence, developing a special form of constructivism.

Studying Weber's definition of power, he realized that the term power should be divided into instructive power and destructive power. More precisely, instructive power means the ability to determine the actions and thoughts of another person, while destructive power means the ability to reduce the capabilities of another person (Kraus, 2014). Krauss said: „Instructive power means the chance to determine a human's thinking or behaviour. Instructive power as chance for instructive interaction is dependent on the instructed person's own will, which ultimately can refuse instructive power. Destructive power means the chance to restrict a human's possibilities. Destructive power as chance for destructive interaction is independent of the instructed person's own will, which can't refuse destructive power" (Kraus, 2014). Turning the gaze of scientists to the instructive and destructive power directs us again to the moral dilemma of its nature and the good and/or evil embodied in it, to destructive or educational and creative force of power and influence, to the idea of voluntariness instead of fear and obedience.

The power can be seen as evil or unjust. However, power can also be seen as a good and something inherited or given to exercise humanistic goals that will help, move and empower others. Having power leads to increased rewards, while a lack of power is associated with more restrictions, threats, and punishments. In addition, „the more power a person has, the less they show and demonstrate empathy for others" (Graeber, 2004, p. 24). Some of the negative effects of power are (Kipnis, 1974, pp. 82–122):

- powerful people tend to make risky, inappropriate or immoral decisions and often cross ethical boundaries;
- when individuals gain power, their self-evaluations become more positive, while their evaluations of others become more negative;
- power tends to weaken social attention, making it difficult to understand other people's points of view;
- people in power tend to use more coercive tactics, increase social distance between themselves and subordinates, believe that powerless individuals are untrustworthy, and devalue the work and abilities of less powerful individuals.

Some positive effects of having power can also be mentioned, for example (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006, pp. 511–536):

- power moves people to action;
- power makes people more responsive to changes in the group and its environment;
- people with power are more proactive, more likely to speak first, make the first move and negotiate;
- people with power tend to experience more positive emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction;
- power is associated with optimism about the future;
- power in the hands of morally responsible people tends to build, not destroy.

While the power is defined as the ability to get someone to do something you want or the ability to make things happen the way you want, the definition for influence emphasizes

the behavioural response of people to the exercise of power. The Online Etymology Dictionary provides the following definitions for influence (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022):

- to influence or change how another person or thing develops, behaves or thinks;
- to make someone change their behaviour, beliefs or opinion, to cause something to change;
- the power to have an effect on people or things;
- the ability to have an effect on people or events.

Etymologically, the word „influence" can be found in the late 14th century as an astrological term – „an ethereal force pouring out from the stars when they are in certain positions, acting on the character or destiny of men", derived from the medieval Latin term – „influentem" – „influence, flow into, flow into, pour into, flow freely" and „outflow of energy that produces an effect". The meaning „exercise of influence by person" dates from the 1580s (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001–2022).

Social influence includes the way in which individuals change their behaviour when meeting the demands of the social environment. It takes many forms and can be found in conformity, socialization, peer pressure, obedience, leadership, persuasion, management. Usually, social influence results from a specific action, command, or request, with people tending to change their attitudes and behaviours in response to their own perception of what the other party might think or do. In 1958, Herbert Kelman identified three types of social influence (Kelman, 1958, pp. 51–60):

- compliance – people tend to agree with the other party but may actually hold their own opinion; compliance is a change in behaviour but not necessarily a change in attitude;
- identification – people are influenced by someone who is liked and respected;
- internalization – people agree with the other side and accept certain norms, both on an individual level and as an external, societal response.

Submission to authority is filled with both positive and negative images. Coercive power creates conflict that can disrupt the functioning of the entire group. Coercive influence can be tolerated when the group is successful, the leader is trusted. In some cases, group members choose to resist the influence of authority. They are more likely to form a revolutionary coalition and resist influence when the influence lacks referent authority, uses coercive methods, and requires group members to perform unpleasant tasks (Lawler, 1975, pp. 163–179). In this regard, Kelman argues that in the compliance stage, group members comply with the authority's requirements, even if they personally disagree with them. However, if the management does not monitor group members, there is a possibility that they will not obey the directives of the managerial body. Identification occurs when the goal set by the managerial body is admired and group members begin to imitate the authority, actions, values, characteristics, perceive and accept the behaviour of the person in authority. If identification is prolonged, it can lead to internalization of affect. At the internalization phase, the individuals accept the induced behaviour because it is consistent with their value system.

At this stage, group members no longer follow the orders of authority but take actions that are consistent with their personal beliefs and opinions (Kelman, 1958, pp. 51–60).

2. Authority and Respect (Voluntariness instead of Fear and Obedience)

The transition from exploring the problem of power in human organization and human society to paying attention to the problem of influence, authority and the respect has its natural progression. Starting with a stronger and more directive, even an extreme, authoritarian, implacable, unquestioning dictatorial position, which the power holds, humanity seeks ways of empathy and compatibility of the interests of rulers and ruled, pushing into practice the concept of influence, which is based on the ability to have an effect on people or events and even more benevolent and significantly democratic presentation of authority and respect, based on personal characteristics, qualities, knowledge and skills possessed by a certain person who is no longer in their eyes an unnecessary ruler but the leader who contributes for well-being of the group and the organization.

While the power is the ability of an individual to influence the actions, beliefs, or behaviour of others, the authority term is used for power that is perceived as legitimate by a social structure (Schein and Greiner, 1988). Authority consists in the recognition of a certain subject of exceptional achievements, knowledge, skills, abilities, his special position in society, their importance for humanity, for a specific object, sphere of social life, science (Efremov, 2005, p. 38).

In medieval English, authority denoted power arising from good reputation, power to persuade people and ability to inspire confidence. From approx. 1400s it is mentioned as „official sanction, permission". The meaning „person in authority" is from 1610. From the 1600s it acquired the meaning „dictatorial" (now restricted to authoritarian). The meaning „having due authority, right of belief or obedience" is from 1650 (*Online Etymology Dictionary,* 2001–2022).

In modern times, authority is defined in many ways as (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022):

– the moral or legal right or ability to control;
– expertise on a given topic;
– the power to control others;
– a person with responsibility for a certain field of activity;
– the ability to influence other people to respect you;
– someone who is an expert on a particular subject and whose opinion influences other people.

In the field of sociology and management sciences, authority is associated with the possession of legitimate power (Cristi, 2005). Maximilian Weber was the first to draw attention to the differences between authority and power. He believed that power involved authority and coercion. According to Weber, power is the ability to do something under the threat of force and sanction, and authority is the rule by which things are done in such a way that orders are perceived by people as fair and lawful (Weber, 1992).

Maximilian Weber points out three types of authority in the organization (Weber, 1992):

- − traditional, based on the belief that the person who rules has a natural right to influence, due to tradition and custom;
- − charismatic, based on the belief in the personal traits and qualities of a given person;
- − rationally legal, based on the belief in the legality of established norms, rules and the right of the incumbent to issue orders.
- − Authority can be distinguished into:
- − expert authority based on knowledge, experience, education, skills, wisdom;
- − authority based on position and title that is acquired along with the duties one holds;
- − authority based on informal contacts which arises in the variety of agreements, understandings which a person makes daily, communicating and interacting with others;
- − authority based on the power one person has or could have over another to control, dominate, coerce.

Viewed more narrowly, authority does not imply power.

Unlike coercion, which is based on real or symbolic violence, the influence of authority is based on voluntary obedience. Nowadays, as authority we understand primarily a relationship between people in which a person has authority to the extent that others are willing to voluntarily recognize this. Authority exists where someone willingly accepts someone else's opinions or judgments as true or correct without subjecting them to scrutiny.

Chester Bernard's argument for one person's acceptance of the performance of a subordinate role and acceptance of following the authority of another is based on the consent of the governed (Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, 2002). Most people seek a balance between what they put into an organization (contribution) and what they get from the organization in return (incentives), i.e. they will agree to do many things in and for the organization within the so-called psychological contract between rulers and ruled. In exchange for certain incentives, subordinates recognize the power of the organization and its managers to direct and influence their behaviour in certain ways. Bernard calls this area of conformity the „zone of indifference". The zone of indifference is the range of authoritative demands to which the subordinate is prepared to respond without subjecting the orders to critical evaluation or judgment. All orders falling within the zone are executed. Requests or orders falling outside the zone of indifference are not considered legitimate or ordered according to the terms of the psychological contract. Employees can choose whether or not to follow them (Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, 2002).

One definition of respect is a feeling of admiration for someone or something caused by their abilities, qualities, and achievements. Respect for others is a type of virtue or strength of character. The Great Immanuel Kant made the virtue of respect the basis of his Categorical

Imperative: „So act so as to treat mankind … always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (Kant, 1785, 2005).

The Online Etymology Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary presents the wide range of interpretation and definition of the respect phenomenon, such as:

- showing an undue bias for (or against) based on respect for a person's external circumstances (*Online Etymology Dictionary,* 2001–2022);
- a positive feeling or respectful action shown to someone or something that is considered important or respected;
- expresses a feeling of admiration for good or valuable qualities;
- a process of honouring someone by showing care, concern, or attention (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* 2024).

Despite the preference given by the individual and society to the application of the concept of authority and respect over the practical application of primary power, the modern society forgets to apply in reality, or at least seems to find it extremely difficult to apply, the idea of respect for human beings and to the surrounding nature. This is undoubtedly rooted in the psychology of the individual who prefers to respect himself and not the other, but this is a problem that should be considered in much more detail and whose place is not exactly the subject of the present scientific work.

Conclusions

The article examines the phenomena of power, influence, authority and respected, emphasizing the possibility and necessity of adopting the concept of „voluntariness instead of fear and obedience" in modern human society and modern human professional and personal life. Undoubtedly, power, as a normal human practice, has its destructive features, it also carries an instructive, educational and creative force. Its necessity throughout all stages of human evolution cannot be doubted, especially since sometimes human beings are not mature enough for the freedom granted to them. However, in the course of human evolution, I would like to argue that the idea of voluntariness instead of fear and obedience should be adopted, especially at a high degree of maturity of the followers, in those groups and organizations where it is applicable, and where it will have a constructive and creative effect.

Although the topic of power and influence is a subject that has been repeatedly researched, through the presented in-depth study, many distinctive concepts and statements are revealed that contribute significantly to a better understanding of the two phenomena – the phenomenon of power and the phenomenon of influence. In addition, a different and complementary concept of power and influence is considered, namely the concept of authority and respect, which at first sight contrasts with power concepts and understanding of power.

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