

0. Introduction

0.1 PREFACE

Politics is about power and decision-making. This principle applies to all epochs, all systems and all cultures. There were and there are no power vacuums whatsoever. Moreover, regardless of whether we consciously enter the political arena or are involuntarily thrown into it, we all inevitably become participants in a zero-sum game for power. Accordingly, it is all the more important to understand and to master the rules of this game. This is true for all of us. We are all stakeholders of one kind or another – whether as official decision-makers, citizens, journalists, lobbyists or political consultants.

In recognition thereof, this book is aimed at providing readers with an honest, objective and comprehensive look at power and its logic. It is for the theorist and the practitioner alike. We welcome all interested readers, those lacking power and those wielding it. If the title has already attracted your attention, you are on the right trail. Our findings are based upon two decades of broad, in-depth experience in national and international political consultancy. Thereby, the focus of this book ranges from conceptual theories to concrete tools, all of which comprise the very foundation of our own proven Power Leadership Approach.

Such a perspective is urgently required. Particularly now, as democracies struggle and strive amidst the challenges posed by the digital age, a fresh but historically rooted approach is necessary. Given the prevalence of untrustworthy information, the importance of the ability – and the willingness – to distinguish political facts from political fictions, for example, cannot be overstated.

Democracies are based upon trust. They are, more specifically, dependent on the faith which members of society place in the processes, institutions and actors of the political realm on a daily basis. This faith must not and should not be blind. Just as transparency is to be expected of democratic institutions, it is also incumbent upon members of society to avail themselves of information and to comprehend the laws of power and politics.

Without an enlightened understanding in this regard, it is of no surprise that myths are amply cultivated. Utopian expectations and prejudices are rampantly spread and will erode, sooner or later, our democratic system. As confidence in democracies diminishes, the specter of apathy, anarchy and even autocracy will increasingly materialize.

In essence, this book constitutes an analytical demystification of power principles. At the same time, it is an inside view of the political cosmos and a reflection on the strategies with which its various protagonists compete for positions and advantages in the large zero-sum game. We trace how power is generated in everyday politics and the key role that consultants play here.

We initiate this examination of the fundamental logic of power by exploring three fundamental, interrelated questions which form a common thread throughout the book, providing our readers with ongoing orientation:

What is the nature of power?

What are its manifestations and fields?

How is it exercised and legitimized in political practice?

This *tour de force* through the thematic complex of power ranges from foundations to questions of specific power techniques, but is not an end in itself. Our book is based on firm convictions, backed up by daily experience. The practical mastery of power requires a profound grasp of its basic principles, modes of manifestation and conditions of legitimacy – and the theoretical understanding of power necessitates thorough familiarity with its application. Furthermore, to understand and master the phenomenon, the theory and the practice of power must be conceptualized in the context of each other.

In light of our aspiration to examine the issue of power in the context of an overall coherent design, this treatise is aimed at a broad audience, as alluded to above. In literary form, we intend to build upon the twenty years of intensive discussions which we have conducted with decision-makers from the fields of politics, economics, civil society and religion, as well as with the consulting industry and the academic community. Furthermore, we also wish to provide insights and suggestions for every citizen who has always wanted to know how power works.

In doing so, we deliberately refrain from moralizing our topic. *Power and its Logic* is first and foremost a descriptive analysis. It does not intend to patronize the readers in any manner. Quite to the contrary, it respects the sovereignty of their

decision-making ability and their right to draw conclusions as they see fit with regard to their own political actions.

Corresponding to the three basic questions posed above, the book is divided into three systematically connected chapters: The Nature of Power – The Concretions of Power – The Practice of Power. Building on our analogy of the struggle for power as a zero-sum game, we could also speak of the opening game, the middle game and the final game of power. Despite this organic and contextual connection, each chapter can be read independently of the others. For example, we offer the hurried reader, who cannot wait to deal with the resources of the power consultant or the specific challenges of political strategy development and implementation, a leap into Chapter 3. Nevertheless, such a leap not only ignores the methodological foundations of power logic, but also the historical and sociological localization – and thus the functional genesis – of the political power consultant. In short, we encourage every reader to take the time to read *Power and its Logic* from beginning to end. Before we proceed *in medias res*, we wish to give a brief overview of the structure, content and method of the book to facilitate navigation through the thematic fields of power.

0.2 STRUCTURE AND SUBSTANCE

In Chapter 1, *The Nature of Power*, we encounter one of the most fundamental questions of the book: What is Power? For this definitional approach, we initiate dialogues with the most important political thinkers of human history: Aristotle, Confucius, Ibn Khaldun, Nicolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, Michel Foucault and many others. After a constructively critical examination of their theses and arguments, we opt for a pragmatic, application-oriented definition: power is doubled potentiality, more precisely, power is the potential assets of individuals and organizations to overcome the potential resistance of other actors.

By virtue of this characterization, power gains a probabilistic component, becoming the subject of strategy and scenario prognoses. In short, power becomes predictable. However, this definition by no means completes the analysis of the nature of power. Based on our definition, we determine whether power follows universal laws that are independent of time and place and are thus utilized in the present-day systems of the United States, Germany or China, as once in ancient Rome or in the medieval Abbasid Empire. The results of this analysis are summarized in a list of cross-cultural principles of power: power is present in all social