

this distinction in our remarks, but we will not focus on it; we aspire rather to lay the foundations for every field of application of political power consultancy with the following curriculum. Our key question for this chapter is therefore: What constitutes the success of power consultants in the political present – and what are their knowledge foundations, tasks, tools and responsibilities and educational pathways?

We would be wise to take the present challenges facing the power leadership curriculum seriously. In a globalized world characterized by international networking (UN and WTO agreements, investment partnerships, global digital news and information systems, etc.) and supranational legislation and jurisdiction (EU directives, ECJ judgments, etc.), the interests of power actors are no longer confined to a single community. Exercising successful influence increasingly requires the strategic positioning of the actor in a global organizational context characterized by growing regulatory complexity. Therefore, the *homo consultans* must take into account both the political systems and cultures of different communities and their dependency relationships. The consultant thus moves in a field of tension between capitals cities competing for power on the one hand, and supranational or international institutions, such as the European Commission or the International Monetary Fund, on the other. The ideal of *homo consultans* is thus the synthesis of a generalist who is familiar with the universal logic of power and the global field of influence, and a specialist who knows the internal logics of specific polities, political subfields, and actor groups.

3.1 THE POWER CHESS MODEL

We want to fill this ideal with life through an analogy. In Chapter 1, we characterized the struggle for (political) power as a zero-sum game, that is, as a competitive game with a constant sum, where every win by one player always involves a loss by another player. We can further concretize this game analogy with a model. In essence, the political contest is *power chess* – and it is the *homo consultans*'s job to lead the client, *homo consultandus*, skillfully through the game to victory. Like politics, chess is a conflict at the heart of which is dominance achieved through the skillful positioning of actors with varying clout and skill profiles (pawns, castles, knights, etc.), and through anticipation of opposing moves. Like no other game, chess integrates strategic and tactical elements. Victory and defeat are decided by the depth of the calculations made in advance of one's own and one's opponent's moves, and by the exploitation of unforeseen mistakes. The relation-

ship between politics and chess goes so far that even in the Middle Ages the nobility was instructed in the “Game of Kings” in order to hone their power to govern (see Chapter 2.5.1). Since then, chess has become established across different social and cultural spaces as a traditional training tool for power.⁴ Because of these parallels, the central prerequisites and challenges for a successful game of chess and politics are analogous,⁵ as elucidated in the following.

(1) Understanding the Board

Developing an understanding of the board means, *first*, to internalize the formal rule canon and the mechanisms of the game: goal, starting line-up, movement of the pieces, standard maneuvers (fork, pin, castling). In short, anyone who understands the board knows the spectrum of all possible and impossible actions; they know the terrain and the troops. Thus, the necessary preconditions for even taking part in the game are fulfilled.

With regard to the model of power chess, this understanding of rules and mechanisms firstly includes an overview of the institutional structure of the political arena as well as the distribution of competencies and responsibilities between the institutions. In Germany, for example, this is the federal constitution with bicameralism, the horizontal and vertical separation of powers and multiparty system. Here the negotiation of interests is largely corporatist, i.e. through a concerted exchange of knowledge, positions and problem-solving approaches between authorities, stakeholders and politicians. This corporatist structure is in stark contrast

4 To this day, economists and military personnel as well as psychologists and educators continue to praise chess as an ideal instrument for strengthening planning ability, leadership, sacrifice, stress resistance, empathy and creativity. See Smith, Roger (2010): *The Long History of Gaming in Military Training, Simulation and Gaming*, 41 (1), pp. 6-19.; Dixit, Avinash K. and Nalebuff, Barry J. (1993): *Thinking Strategically. The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.; pp. 41-45; and Hunt, Samuel J. and Cangemi, Joseph (2014): *Want to Improve Your Leadership Skills? Play Chess!*, *Education*, 134 (3), pp. 359-368.; p. 361. An elucidating inquiry on chess as a tool for strategy learning and its varying interpretations and social functions during history can be found in Clark (2019): pp. 122-130.

5 Of course, this does not mean that every excellent chess player has the makings of an outstanding political consultant – or vice versa. The structural similarity between power chess and the “game of kings” does not mean a substantive equivalence. It is therefore not our intention to derive the power leadership curriculum from the chess game, but only to provide an appropriate model.

to the US political system, for example, which is characterized by an extremely competitive and pluralistic conflict of interests.

Second, understanding the board involves the internalization of the concrete decision-making rules and processes of the legislative, executive, judiciary and administration at the various levels of the system. A European example is the legislative procedure involving a trilogue between the Commission, the EU Council and the European Parliament, and comitology, that is, the implementation of EU legislation through a fine-tuned system of administrative and expert committees.

The *third* point comprises the specific laws and regulations that define the limits and possibilities for the enforcement of interests and the exercise of power. This outlines a wide range of legal norms, ranging from fundamental principles such as freedom of expression and association, to highly specific rules such as the ID-card scheme for lobbyists in the Bundestag.

The *fourth* and final factor is the political culture and language, both the ethos of the power struggle and the political narrative, and the unwritten rules and vocabulary of discourse. Political language is required to be understandable for all protagonists of the political sphere and to attain the necessary legal, professional legitimacy.

Ideally, these four aspects must become second nature to every player in power chess; they must become part of their power competence. All these factors have in common that they are largely fixed. These are therefore the strategic constants introduced in Chapter 2.5.2. Just like the rules for moving and positioning pieces and for standard maneuvers in the game of kings, they determine which actions in power chess are possible and who can execute them under what conditions. Of course, this says nothing about which moves should be employed by an actor, be it an authority, a company, an association, a civil society association, or – on the other hand – a minister, a CEO, a general manager or the head of an NGO.

(2) Reading the Positions

Chess is a game of positions. Victory and defeat depend solely on whether a king is secured by the pawns, a queen is covered or a pawn is able to make its way unobstructed to the eighth line for promotion. Beginners perceive the mingling of the figures on the board as a confusing jumble; they can provide information about which figure can move where but the strategic and tactical potential of a complex position and the balance of forces on the board are a closed book to them. Professionals, on the other hand, are able to accurately assess the threats or opportunities that arise from any configuration of positions – including strategic statements such as “checkmate in ten moves!”

Analogously, anyone who wants to play power chess successfully must be able to read the positions, i.e. interpret and evaluate political positioning. This not only means knowing which other power actors are relevant to the achievement of one's own policy objectives (regulation of a service sector, amendment of a law, execution of a construction project, etc.), but also what their agendas and motives are, who (potential) opponents and allies are, and – above all – the relationships between these protagonists. This information is required to decipher the balance of power in political issues and to identify directions of development and trends. Accordingly, the ability to read positions requires a comprehensive and highly specialized knowledge spectrum, such as whether a state government maintains close ties to state lotteries and is therefore motivated to maintain public control over sweepstakes at all costs; whether an interior minister is under great pressure from within the party to crack down on illegal immigration, even though this does not correspond to his or her personal values; whether an environmental organization supports a tightening of consumer protection to please their supporters, etc.

These positional factors have in common that they are not fixed; they fall under the category of the strategic variables introduced in Chapter 2.5.2. We are concerned here not with the framework of power chess, but the result of the actions of a specific game. It is possible to speak analogously here of chess compositions, that is, of certain created positions with which the player is confronted and for which a solution must be found. The goal-oriented analysis and evaluation of such positions is a prerequisite for developing a successful strategy.

(3) Taking Control of the Match

Chess is not a game of theoretical contemplation and reflection. It is a game of attack and defense, all about dominating the field. A deep understanding of the game and an excellent positional analysis are therefore useless, if they do not lead to victory match or – at least – to the imposition of a stalemate. Taking control of the match means preempting the opponent's moves, forcing a reaction by attacking, disrupting and destroying the opponent's strategy and tactics. All this is only possible if the player is not only capable of deep calculation and has a good comprehension of the game, but also demonstrates strong nerves, creativity, courage and a willingness to make sacrifices; anyone who hesitates too long loses the initiative and finally the game.

These characteristics are also found in power chess. They are a prerequisite for asserting one's own interests in the struggle for influence against the resistance of other actors, and for exercising interpretive power over the common good. This principle applies to all players, whether political institutions, private sector actors or civil society organizations. In the power chess of the representative democracy,

taking control of the match involves using concrete measures to successfully influence the collective decision-making and will-forming process in the long term, for example: organizing majority votes; determining the agenda of a legislative or standing committee; placing an article in a key political medium at the right time; controlling the composition of an influential panel of experts; mobilizing particular groups for a specific topic through targeted campaigning; and forging stable alliances with resource-rich allies. All these instruments, which do not even come close to covering the full spectrum of political influence, are specific features of power chess. Successfully taking control of a game involves not only mastering these tools, but also knowing which instrument is appropriate for which phase of the overall strategy (in chess terminology: opening, midgame or final) and how these instruments need to be coordinated to achieve the game objective. This is the point at which game understanding and position analysis must flow together in a creative process; the point at which power politics is actually made.

The tasks of the political consultant emerge directly from the three challenges of the power-chess model – understanding the board, reading the positions, taking control of the match – which thus provide the three guiding principles and aspects of the power leadership curriculum: empower, condense and influence. First, the *homo consultans* must empower the client, the *homo consultandus*, to understand the board of power chess and to internalize its rules and mechanisms as power knowledge. Second, the *homo consultans* must condense all relevant information about the client's specific game (or games) into a positional analysis in order to lay the foundation for a promising strategy supported by power knowledge. And thirdly, with the client, the *homo consultans* must actively influence the political space and use suitable political instruments to take control of the game of power chess. This summary of the power leadership approach presents the three main tasks of the consultant and the corresponding challenges of power chess (or the power vectors introduced in Chapter 2.5) as being strictly and unambiguously separate. Of course, in political reality the divisions in everyday consultancy practice are not so sharp. The triad of empowering, condensing and influencing forms – as do their equivalents – a totality: experiences from influencing politics impact on position analyses and on the internalization of the system. Not without reason do we speak of *one* consulting approach with three aspects. This interdependence should be kept in mind when we discuss implementing the three guiding principles of power leadership. In the following, we want to explain concretely what it means to empower, to condense and to influence in the competition for political power.