

“Knowledge is a lesser requirement for leading others in comparison to power and authority.”

Should I be smart or should I have power and/or authority? This is the most difficult assignment I have had in the program so far. It was also the first time my language and cultural background interfered in a major way with my thinking. I believe I do have to start this paper with explaining the social context, the pressure of particular circumstances that I have experienced while working on this assignment. Authority and power are synonyms meaning absolutely the same thing in Russia. Moreover, to me, as a Russian person the only power I know is coercive power and this kind of power as well as the authority are the obligatory attributes of the only leadership my people have known. With myriads of examples from the history of my country I do not consider authority and power/coercive power as necessary attributes of the effective leadership but let me examine these concepts more thoroughly.

In order to react to this statement I have decided to take separate words/terms and see if it's enough to have only power, only authority, and only knowledge to lead people. Here are my speculations. If you have authority, ascendancy, or coercion power you don't need knowledge to make people do whatever you want. Here is where authority and power, specifically coercion power, mean the same thing in Russia. It doesn't matter if you are smart or not if you have the position, the title and can use such means as military force to compel people around you. Many examples in Russian history prove this idea. It is the only way Russia has seen leadership. The best example of using authority and coercion power without much knowledge is Ivan the Terrible. Even his name implies that he behaved in the way he wanted and many people around him suffered from

it while the historian mentioned that he wasn't very intelligent or clever. However, that doesn't necessarily make him a true, effective leader. This kind of authority and power generate only fear. Such leaders don't inspire people to follow but rather make them do so on pain of death. Based on my cultural background, authority and coercion power make leaders tyrants. If we are trying to distinguish features of true, effective leadership it is not enough to have only authority or coercion power.

Of course, very often people with authority hold all the power. But I believe that there is a different kind of power that comes from those who follow a true leader (follow because they are inspired to do so not coerced). In order to obtain this kind of power, the true leader has to earn respect and trust of his/her supporters. Effective leaders, regardless of whether they have authority or not, have the power. Sometimes, leaders with power gain the authority. The greatest example of the true leader in Russia would be Lenin. This is the person who was able to paint his vision of revolution so vividly that people were willing to follow him, to cooperate with him, to bring authority to him. Most importantly he was able to share his vision and inspire not only elite, top people but also normal, regular people, "unschooled minds". Let me come back to this idea later. So, to me this kind of power is the most important feature of a true leader. But, how do people get this power? I believe it is impossible without the knowledge. It's hard to imagine people trusting and respecting the leader if he/she is incompetent. This point is also proved by the recent events in Ukraine. Many people chose one president candidate over another because the latter one was not educated and couldn't speak fluently and bring his ideas, vision down to people. Of course, there should be the distinction about what I mean by the knowledge here, so let me move on to that.

I mentioned Lenin as the model case of the effective leader who had knowledge first, then power from his followers, and finally, all that resulted in authority for him. But there were other

people in Russia who wanted to start revolution long before Lenin appeared. Decembrists were very well educated people, had knowledge and skills to start revolution but failed. The reason for that was because they wanted to do it without people, without the masses. Oppenheimer is another great example. With the outstanding knowledge of physics he failed to be a direct leader. If you have the knowledge that does not necessarily make you a true leader. Not only you have to have the knowledge but also be able to bring it down for ordinary people to understand. Again, Lenin wasn't a good leader only because he was knowledgeable in jurisprudence, philosophy, economy, laws, foreign languages, and political science (although the term wasn't there at his times). However, all this knowledge has helped him to see the opportunities for and make good decisions about what is beneficial for the country. Moreover, he was able to argue and defend his ideas, to find the ways to express them in the way for the peasants, workers and elite members to understand. It's also true when a person can make people believe in some story (like Bush) even if they are not exactly very intelligent. But such leaders still use knowledge, the knowledge of how to convey their stories in the way so nobody even pays attention to their education or knowledge in one specific area.

I would like to prove my point with the borderline case, again from the Russian history. Khruchev, the Russian leader after Stalin had almost no education, was not a very smart person. He had the authority and coercive power, so according to myself wouldn't have to worry about the knowledge. While he was a good leader in some instances like when he questioned personality cult, he failed to be an effective leader in other instances. So he was a good leader when he addressed things from the viewpoint of people and obviously didn't have to have a lot of knowledge for that. He wasn't a good leader when he did nothing to stop the cold war with the United States of America but on the contrary started it, which brought Russian nation to alienation.

I think he couldn't foresee better future for the country because of the lack of spacious mind. Having knowledge supports your spacious mind and means a lot while, again, I'm not talking about the knowledge in one specific area, like physics or mathematics here. Nobody would say that knowledge of how to solve quadratic equations is essential for leading people. This spacious mind besides some other things is able to bring power to leaders, which may then result in gaining the authority (however, not necessarily). Also remember Francis Bacon's "Knowledge is Power"?

To summarize I believe that knowledge of a specific subject is lesser requirement for direct leading others than knowledge of how and the ability to bring the story down so people can relate to it. However, the latter kind of knowledge and spacious mind are more important than authority and coercion power for true leadership because they bring the kind of power/trust that comes from the supporters that is more important than anything else in true leading people.

It is fair to note that all mentioned above is not true for indirect leaders. Indirect leaders gain power through their work, through the knowledge of one specific area. I don't think indirect leaders care much about authority or about bringing their work down to people because usually indirect leaders are not seeking for that leadership. They are able to lead because of the expertise in that one field that comes with the knowledge of the specific subject. So they have knowledge, but little power or authority in the larger sense.

So you can see that I believe that knowledge is more important for direct and indirect leading others in comparison with authority and power. Those are just different kinds of knowledge for different types of leadership. Personally I think that I'm nowhere near the leadership because of my lack of knowledge in how better to do it, as well as the lack of expertise.