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ALVIN TOFLER'S THOUGHTS ON THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

Ong Van Nam

Testing and Quality Assurance Department, Ho Chi Minh University
of Banking, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Email: namov@buh.edu.vn

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Abstract

Different from the traditional types of power in the past based on violence and wealth, scientific knowledge is becoming the new economic and political power in the new era. Vietnam is a developing country, so to be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the powers of the five continents in the context of the fierce national synergy competition today, the Communist Party and the State need to properly and fully assess the position, role and power of scientific knowledge to plan directions and implement a roadmap to build and develop a knowledge economy. With the aim of providing more theoretical basis to affirm the thesis "knowledge is the number one power among the powers that have existed in history", this article focuses on studying the views of sociologists, American futurologist - Alvin Toffler on knowledge, power, and intellectual power thereby giving comments and evaluations on this point of view.

Keywords

Knowledge; power; knowledge power.

1. Introduce

Humanity is entering the third wave, a time when a new system of wealth creation is being born on the basis of information and scientific knowledge. With its increasingly important role and position, knowledge and information are the new bases of economic and political power in this century. The strength or weakness of information and knowledge will become a key factor determining the strength and weakness and prosperity of each country. In Vietnam, thoroughly grasping the role of knowledge on the path of innovation, the Communist Party of Vietnam has always focused on building and promoting the role of human resources, especially

high-quality human resources. The political report of the 10th Party Central Committee at the 11th National Party Congress wrote: "Developing a knowledge-based economy on the basis of education, training and technology development; synchronously building science and technology infrastructure, first of all information technology, communication and automation technology, improving research and application capacity in association with the development of high-quality human resources" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011, 220-221). However, at present, the quality of human resources in our country is still weak, lacking, inconsistent, not meeting the requirements of economic, cultural and social development of the country. While Vietnam is still confused with the third industrial revolution, developed countries have caught up with the fourth industrial revolution. If Vietnam does not quickly seize opportunities and overcome challenges, it will fall further behind. Facing the opportunity of globalization and the fourth industrial revolution, in order to build high-quality human resources to create the foundation for the implementation of the roadmap for the development of knowledge economy - economy 4.0 is considered is a key stage in our party's human development strategy. To contribute to a deeper understanding of the current situation and prospects of our country's history in the new era, this article explores A.Toffler's thoughts on knowledge, the power and power of knowledge.

2. Material and Method

Theoretical basis: The article is made on the basis of the worldview and methodology of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the development of high-quality human resources and building a knowledge economy.

Research methods: The article uses a combination of research methods such as historical and logical methods, comparison and contrast, analysis and synthesis. In addition, in the process of inquire and present the article, the author uses the textual method and references related documents.

Research results: from the analysis of the concepts of knowledge, power and knowledge power from A.Toffler's point of view, the article makes some comments that are incorporated into the above concepts.

3. Main results and findings

3.1. Perspectives on knowledge

Knowledge is a dynamic, multi-faceted concept, so it is easy to see that there are many different interpretations of this issue. Some people think that knowledge is a systematic understanding of things, natural or social phenomena, obtained through systematic and continuous activities over a long period of time of the mind. Some people think that knowledge is information, documents, theoretical bases, different skills, acquired by an organization or an individual through practical

experience or through education - training. Some scholars think that knowledge is theoretical or practical knowledge about an object, a problem, that can be explained about it; is what already known in a particular field or in its entirety, in the aggregate; foundations, information, documents, knowledge or the like obtained by actual experience or by specific circumstances. Although the above concepts are different in terms of words and forms of expression, the basic content is the same, that is, they all consider knowledge to be systematic knowledge, the result of the process of self-conscious activity and seriousness of people in perception.

In the philosophical dictionary of the progressive publishing house of Moscow, scientists say that "knowledge is the product of social activity and human thought, reproduced in thought, in the form of language, objective relationships are being transformed in reality" (M.M. Rodentan, ed., 1986; Al-Rashidi et al., 2021). The dictionary of simplified philosophy writes: "knowledge is the result of man's process of perceiving the real world, reproducing in his mind the attributes and laws of that world, and expressing them in the form of language or other forms of signs" (Huu Ngoc, ed., 1987; Carter, 2020). According to A. Toffler, knowledge is: "Information, data, drawings, fantasies, attitudes, values and other symbolic products of society" (Tan Ngon Truoc, 2001; Filipponi & Oommen, 2021). He argued that scientific knowledge consists of: "conditions such as assumptions, values, images, agitation along with precise technical ability" A. Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 316). According to Lyotard - the most typical representative of postmodernism, he introduced a rather new concept of knowledge. According to this philosopher, knowledge is an ability expressed through various types of language games. Language games (knowledge) have two basic types: narrative language games (narrative knowledge) and scientific language games (scientific knowledge). The concept of knowledge as above comes from the role-playing and co-participation in the development of information and communication technologies as they become the means to express narratives. Although this is a very new concept of knowledge and more or less affects the perception of the online community, it is still not a popular concept. From the above definitions and concepts of knowledge, it can be understood that scientific knowledge is the result of the cognitive process of reality, which has been tested by historical and social practical activities and is consistent with logic, reflect reality in the human mind in the form of concepts, judgments, and inferences.

3.2. Perspectives on power

Man is a species-specific animal, the species characteristic of man is that he cannot live alone, in isolation, nor can he have absolute freedom in social activities. Because human nature is a combination of social relations, people must live in organizations and communities, so each person is under the influence of others or the community. This attribute becomes the criterion that distinguishes humans from animals. On the surface, many animals also live in an organized environment,

but the organization of the animals has a strong survival instinct without reaching self-awareness.

From the above fact, we can see that, if anywhere in the community is organized, there, in order for activities to be realized, it is necessary to rely on command and obedience. By appearance, one person can influence the behavior of another person or a group of people. By nature, people who have the power and ability to dominate others also need others to influence, that is, they need an object.

It can be said that power is an old issue, but it is the most important category of political knowledge. In life, too, in any era, power plays an important role, it profoundly affects all activities of social life, even beyond the imagination of every human being. Discussing this issue, A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 19) writes: "When it comes to power, we cannot help but have a bad impression in our minds, because humanity tends to abuse power, but power itself is neither good nor bad. On the contrary, man has a close relationship with power and cannot escape it". As early as antiquity, in the *Athenian Constitution and Politics*, Aristotle argued that *power is not only inherent in all sensible things, but also in inorganic nature*. In the Middle Ages, theologians understood power in a different order, they conceived of mankind as well as all kingdoms as just a derivative of "divine power". Accordingly, they have brought the "power of God" to the forefront. The Renaissance utopians and encyclopedias emphasized only state power and considered state power to be the "kingdom of reason". From the above fact, it proves that power is a universal social relation, existing as an objective necessity, dominating all members of society; No one can stay out of a power relationship, if he is not involved in a power relationship in one place, then he will also participate in a power relationship elsewhere, at another time.

Although there has been a lot of research on power, so far, political scientists have not come to a consensus on the definition of power, in other words, there is no defined definition of power. Scientists call it the norm. In the original sense, power is synonymous with power, the strong wielding power will dominate and dominate the weak. American political scientist, K.Dantra argued that *holding power is forcing others to obey*; Lesliel Lipson considers *power to be the ability to achieve results through a coordinated action*; Joseph Nye then assumes: *Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the results you want*. In the Soviet philosophical encyclopedia, the concept of power is that power is the ability to exercise one's will and influence the behavior and conduct of others through some means, such as prestige, state authority, strength,... Even when A.Toffler wrote the *Powershift*, he did not give an adequate definition of power. A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 27) writes: "Power, by which we define the rules relating to the individual and the state, is now automatically changing the definition". Elsewhere A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 39) argued that, "power is the domination between man and man. The form of power that exposes, of course, includes violence, wealth and knowledge to force others to act according to my will". From the above points of view of A.Toffler, it can be understood: power is the rules relating to the individual

and the state, the control between people and people, forcing others to act according to our wishes.

1. Power is a manifestation in society, in a certain relationship that a person or a group of people can have to force others to obey. In other words, *power is something that whoever possesses it can control the behavior of others for their benefit.*
2. From a class perspective, political power can be understood as the power of a class or a class alliance, a social group, of the masses of the people, it reflects the ability of a class to realize its objectivity interests. In one sense of the word Friedrich Engels writes: *political power in its own right, is the organized violence of one class to oppress another.*
3. The nature of power is multifaceted, it is necessary for the community as an indispensable part of the organization. Since the species is established, people want to take action for personal benefit or community benefit, there is always a command-subordination relationship. However, it should be noted that the person who gives the order is not always someone who has the upper hand in terms of financial power or social status (usually).
4. According to the Marxist point of view, if power in society manifests itself in a command-submission relationship, then the diversity of that relationship (who commands, who obeys) stems from the diversity of social existence under forms of communities. It is in society that has formed countless groups and classes with different interests, it is difficult to list them all. These can be mentioned: power is present in the generational relationship between the elderly and the young; between the rich and the poor; between the mandarins and the people. Even within the family it is impossible not to appear gender-dependent obedience and command to create matriarchy or patriarchy; depend on strength to say relation according to husband or wife; dependent on the economy to know who is the head of the household, etc...
5. Power in terms of the command-subordination relationship has another manifestation. Talking about the power of women, or more precisely the role of beauty, of women in all ages is such a case. The ancient history of East and West has no shortage of stories mentioning this relationship. *The four great beauties* of China is the most typical example. The beauties can dissipate an impending war, can bring the country a huge fortune, can even exchange for peace for a country. With that in mind, writer Nguyen Du wrote: *Her glances would make a king bequeath his throne. Her talent, like her beauty, was second to none.*

3.3. Perspectives on knowledge power

A.Toffler's conception of intellectual power, or the ascendancy of knowledge, was first introduced in *Future Shock* and then *The Third Wave*, but not until the *Powershift*, this concept is clearly shown, when he not only repeats the issues raised in *Future Shock* and *The Third Wave*, but also analyzes the decisive changes that

are taking place about the relationship between knowledge and power in the future.

When it comes to the quality of power, in the *Powershift*, A. Toffler pointed out the origin and named each type of power in society, then went into deep analysis about each of those types of power and said their role, position or strength. He names three types of power that are fundamental to the command-and-subordination relationship: the power of violence, the power of wealth or money, and the power of knowledge. Of these three types of power, according to him, the power of violence has the lowest quality - lack of elasticity, the power of money has a medium quality - is very flexible, and the power with the highest quality is the power of knowledge. The power of knowledge is the kind of power of the future. Because, according to A. Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 156), "knowledge can replace other sources of material, it is something that can never be taken, and used forever. Knowledge is a substitute for all".

Seeing the role of scientific knowledge in practice, A. Toffler proposed a new theory of social power and explored the changes taking place in trade, economics, politics, and international relations, as well as the world situation. Observing the changes in power from a traditional industrial society to a post-industrial society, especially in developed countries, he made the following observation: from taking power from violence and then money as the basis. Social power is shifting to taking knowledge as the basis. Of course, knowledge does not eliminate the power of violence and money, but today it is not only the source of power of the highest quality, but also the most important factor of power and money. The processes going on in developed countries, first of all democratization, are associated with the ascendancy of knowledge as the foundation of new power. If violence and money are the prerogative of the strong and the rich, then knowledge has a revolutionary attribute that the weakest and poorest can also take it. Therefore, the power of knowledge is the most democratic kind of power.

According to A. Toffler, over the past three centuries, the arena of political struggle in industrialized countries has been the distribution of wealth: "Who gets what?". Now, in the wealthiest countries, the struggle for power has increasingly become a struggle for the distribution of knowledge and the ability to acquire knowledge. And, likewise, both in the present and future world struggle for power, knowledge acquisition and knowledge mastery will be decisive. Therefore, all contemporary countries understand that in the information society - the age of knowledge economy, which country has mastery of knowledge, information and creative ideas, high technologies and modern science, that country will gain a dominant role over the rest of the world.

Of course, the practice of creating material wealth is always an activity with a historical - social purpose of man. But, unlike before, a new system of wealth creation is emerging. The powerful man of the present and future times, according to A. Toffler, is not a blue-collar worker, nor a financier or a manager, but an innovator who combines knowledge and energy action force.

According to A. Toffler, the most important form of property today is the

intangible. It is knowledge, i.e. symbolic, or meta-symbolic wealth. The same knowledge can be used by many individuals at the same time to create wealth and produce more knowledge, especially the role of the transcendental intelligence network (electronic high-speed lines of communication). Therefore, in contrast to factories and fields, knowledge stretches to infinity. He concluded: Today the most important revolution taking place on the planet is the development of Third Wave civilization; it brings with it a system that can create fundamentally new wealth. Any movement that doesn't understand that will fail again. Every state that imprisons knowledge imprisons its citizens into a nightmarish past.

A. Toffler does not directly discuss the "Third World" specifically, but he does refer to it indirectly when discussing "fast countries and slow countries". According to him, the division of the world is changing fundamentally. Since World War II, the world has been divided into capitalism and communism, into North and South. And today, the division in this way is gradually losing meaning, a new division is emerging: From now on the world is divided into the fastest countries and the slowest countries. In fast economies, technology accelerates production, and that is primarily due to the rapid speed of information, communication and knowledge circulating in the economic system. Fast economies have faster new wealth creation systems than slow economies. Meanwhile, economic processes in agrarian societies seemed to stall. Therefore, to overcome backwardness, slow countries must pay special attention to the time factor. Each time unit won is worth more than each previous unit of time. Time itself has become an increasingly decisive factor of production. And here, knowledge is used to bridge time gaps. According to him, the advantages of abundant raw materials and cheap human resources will become increasingly ineffective. The radical new wealth creation system of the twenty-first century will bring about a major change in the distribution of power. This new system is the rapid exchange and dissemination of materials, initiatives, badges and symbolic meanings. It creates what we call the "symbolic economy", the "super-symbolic economy " or in other words the power of the physical economy will be replaced by the power of the knowledge economy. This means: "We must realize that wisdom is the source of new wealth. It is not land, money, materials, or technology, but the minds and skills of people" (Rowan Gibson, ed., 2006, 53). When talking about development strategies of poor countries, he paid special attention to agriculture. According to him, agriculture is not necessarily a "backward" sector of the economy, but rather an area that will be more involved in progress when it comes to informatics, genetics and new technologies. A knowledge-based agriculture can also become an economic spearhead. But to do so, countries have to participate in the world economy at a fast pace, especially in radio telecommunications and computerization systems. Today's lagging countries have the ability to pass a stage of development to leapfrog the knowledge, information and communication of the First Wave to the knowledge, information and communication of the Third Wave. The new key to economic development is clear: the "gap" must be filled by informatics and electronics. This is not a gap

between North and South, but a phase difference between fast countries and slow countries.

In the *Powershift*, A.Toffler not only sees the world's good prospects in the Third Wave, but also takes into account the factors of randomness and uncertainty in human development. However, it can be said that the pictures of the world in the near future drawn by him are generally more optimistic. He doesn't make impossible promises. Because according to him, although so far in the era considered civilized, the level of impact and influence of violence seems to have decreased gradually, but violence does not lose its role because of that. its inherent position, but this is still the main means to power and the means of all times. Live in today's times, according to A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 41,45) "the highest quality of power is to apply knowledge", "Knowledge transforms itself into a quality of supreme power today, it changes geography dependent on money and violence, which becomes the essential role of power, it even extends the supremacy of the former two powers, violence and wealth". So, of those three tools, the most useful is still knowledge. A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 30) asserts that "*New knowledge is the key to opening the gates of economic hegemony in the 21st century*", it can be used to reward, encourage or punish, to persuade. Even, A.Toffler also said that knowledge has the ability to transform, like turning enemies into friends. Moreover, by simply grasping the correct information, it is possible to avoid the waste of wealth and energy, which has been proven by practical activities. Therefore, in addition to elasticity, knowledge has another mission; it becomes the special source of future supremacy.

Emphasizing the role of knowledge, A.Toffler (2006, Vol 1, 47) writes: "Since violence is a finite thing, when performing an act of destruction, attack or defense, people can only use force to a limited extent. Wealth is also expressed in the same way. Money can't buy everything, even the mountains of gold and mountains of silver will have an end. While knowledge is not so restricted, we can, on the contrary, pursue it forever to the maximum".

In comparing the disparity of knowledge with money and violence, A. Toffler proved that, if I use a gun, it is impossible for him to use the same gun at the same time; Also, if I use the same amount of money, you can't use the same amount at the same time. But, we can at the same time use the same knowledge to maintain or attack the opponent; can even stimulate the emergence of new knowledge. He came to the conclusion: "Knowledge has the nature of taking never to be exhausted", "using the power of knowledge to fight, together with the use of violent power and fighting wealth", and he argues that: "By definition of power, violence and wealth should be attributed to the rich or the powerful; but based on today's knowledge, the weak and the poor can transform themselves to seize power" and therefore, "knowledge is the most democratic source of power" (A.Toffler, 2006, Vol 1, 48). Because knowledge has stimulated the spirit not only for millions of young people today in cultivating knowledge and experience to affirm their position, but it is also a warning, a word of encouragement. advice to the state-government

in implementing the process of social democratization in the future.

4. Conclusion

For A. Toffler, violence, wealth and knowledge are the three factors that determine the distribution of power in society. Francis Bacon with the slogan "knowledge is power", although he outlined the hierarchy of knowledge with power, he did not mention the interrelationship between knowledge and violence and wealth. And, so far, no one has analyzed the revolutionary transformation relationship in *that golden triangle of power*. Therefore, it can be said that A. Toffler was the first to analyze the dialectical relationship between knowledge and violence, knowledge with wealth, violence with wealth and especially, analyzed the change that has revolutionary nature in this golden triangle of power.

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