

METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL ENGINEERING

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Summary

The article is devoted to the analysis of methods and techniques of social engineering. Social engineering indicates the means of impact and practical measures that have induced a desired behavior of individuals and social groups. There are plenty of them. Not all the processes which are used by manipulators are presented here. In this study I discussed only those which seem to be the most useful in the field of politics. Persuasion is considered to be a basic tool of social engineering. In the concepts of this term we can encounter observations about gradual, intellectual influence on the views of other person and we can assume that it is a positive method of social influence. The other form of social transmission are manipulative behaviors which are the way of changing views and opinions against the will and without the knowledge of an influenced person. The manipulation phenomenon should be subjected to critical judgment particularly in the context of its goal achievement. It is necessary to strive for eliminating this method from behavior of politicians. It is very important sphere of contemporary instruments of social research because manipulation and persuasion play a key role in politics becoming essential tool in the game of power.

Keywords: manipulation, persuasion, methods of social engineering, techniques techniques, impact of social engineering.

Introduction

From the earliest of times, rulers have exploited the manipulative and persuasive techniques in order to subjugate their subordinates by attaching them to specific values, norms and their vision of the world.

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Firstly, let us understand the differentiation between the methods and techniques. According to A. K. Koźmiński and A. M. Zawiślak, a method is a conscious and orderly complex mode of action repeated due to its effectiveness². It should be noted that, the concept of a method is much wider than a technique. One of the classifications proposed by Z. Martyniak, indicates that a method, at a higher level of abstraction is the principle and at the lower level is the procedure, recipe or just technique³. I believe it is sufficient enough to understand that a method “*in abstracto*” is the principle and “*in concreto*” becomes technique.

Professor J. Rudniański define the ways of subordination of the controlled systems as methods of unarmed struggle. He mentions the method of depriving (preventing meeting the elementary needs, indicating the behavior, whose adoption will result in recovery of this possibility) the method of intensifying non-elementary needs (also pointing ways of meeting these needs), the method of ideals (referring to the value systems) and the method intensification of fears (increases the chances of subordination and achievement of greater vulnerability to the previous methods)⁴. M. K. Mlicki proposes calling such ways of fight of the unarmed ways a higher degree of social engineering, requiring subordination of the techniques, which in spite of not very accurate combination of terms must be called operational⁵.

Different classification is proposed by A. Podgórecki, according to which, social engineering transmission can be put into three forms of action⁶. The first kind are actions of persuasion. Within this framework controlling system is trying to influence beliefs and attitudes of the controlled system, by means of persuasion. This transmission is characterized by high degree of openness of intentions of the sender⁷.

The persuasion is considered to be a basic tool of social engineering. In the definitions of this term there are repeated observation about mild, gradual and intellectual impact on the views of the other person. The persuasion is “persuading about something, encouraging or advising against with giving the arguments”⁸. Similar explanation provides Dictionary of Polish:

² See: A. K. Koźmiński, A. M. Zawiślak, *Pewność i gra*, PWE, Warszawa 1982, s. 51.

³ See: Z. Martyniak, *Metody organizowania procesów pracy*, PWE, Warszawa 1996, s. 50.

⁴ See: J. Rudniański, *Elementy prakseologicznej teorii walki: z zagadnień kooperacji negatywnej*, PAN, Warszawa 1983, s. 96 i n.

⁵ See: M. K. Mlicki, *Socjotechnika. Zagadnienia etyczne i prakseologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, Wrocław 1986, s. 51.

⁶ See: A. Podgórecki, *Zasady socjotechniki*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1966, s. 137.

⁷ Ibidem, s. 137.

⁸ See: E. Sobol (red.), *Słownik wyrazów obcych*, PWN, Warszawa 1996, s. 850.

“the persuasion (from the Latin *persuasio*, to convince) is explanation of something to someone, talking into or advising against something with the providing arguments in favor of the validity of the sentences”⁹.

Mentioned technique is considered to be soft because persuasive impact of the sender on the recipient lies in feasibly soft but direct informing about the need and providing ability to make a choice based on the belief about the rightness of the point of view or the purpose of some activities. Effectiveness of the persuasive activities is conditioned largely by the ability to refer to precisely formulated opinions of the addressee or his current emotional states¹⁰.

The persuasion functioning on political market it's persuading the voters by the political groups, the electoral committees and the candidates. Persuading the voters in order to give their electoral vote just to them. This persuading is based on two methods of impact. The first way is rational reasoning which accurately explains the phenomena and social processes, shows undisputed facts, provides statistics, provides logical conclusions. The second way is the emotional impact where politicians strive for bringing about positive or negative psychological states of the electorate (satisfaction, sense of security, sense of danger etc.)¹¹. In the light of the above considerations, it can be said, that persuasion is seen as a positive method of social engineering.

The second form of social engineering are manipulative behaviors which are used to modify ideas, attitudes or beliefs against the will of controlled system or at least without his knowledge. Dictionary of foreign words defines manipulation as “all activities associated with sorting out some matters, devious taking advantages of some circumstances, bending the rules, misrepresenting facts, in order to achieve your goals”¹². In turn in the Synonym Dictionary for School, the word MANIPULATION is placed next to pejoratives such as: way of dealing, action, treatment, procedure, arrangement, course of action, or machinations, combinations, games, behind-the-scenes dealings, intrigue, cheating, mischief-making, dupery, addle, fog, haze, disorientation, deception, ruction, daylight rob bery¹³.

⁹ S. Dubisz (red.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, tome P- Ś, PWN, Warszawa 2006, s. 99.

¹⁰ See: M. Szulczewski, *Informacja społeczna*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1979, s. 89.

¹¹ See: A. Czajowski, *Wyborca na rynku politycznym [in:] Marketing polityczny w teorii i praktyce*, red. A. W. Jabłoński, L. Sobkowiak, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2009, s. 128-129.

¹² S. Dubisz (red.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, tome K- Q, PWN, Warszawa 2006, s. 557.

¹³ See: A. Dąbrówka, E. Geller, R. Turczyn, *Słownik synonimów*, Świat Książki, Warszawa 1995, s. 85.

According to J. Fras manipulation is insidious, covert, unreliable compilation of information and language measures whose objective is to influence the moods and perceptions of other people. It's also obtaining opportunities to control behavior of people, in order to achieve their own benefits¹⁴. According to M. Tokarz manipulation indicates the communication moves wherein the unaware recipient is taken to the direction, which only the sender is aware of¹⁵.

These definitions indicate the fact that manipulation in relation to interpersonal contacts will adopt a negative meaning. Major distinguishing features of manipulation can comprise of: hiding objectives of the action, camouflaging the action itself, the use of deceit, maintaining false recipients consciousness, instrumental use of social needs, direct or indirect objectification of recipient, achieving their own benefit at the expense of the interests of others¹⁶.

The political manipulation has particularly negative tinge and it may mean: hiding the real political objectives in the form of untrue purposes which gains acceptance more easily, creating in the consciousness of people who are the subject of manipulation states, which may result in specific actions of voters (e.g. inducing a sense of danger), creating images of reality which are supposed to hide facts, creating images of their politicians or the face of their own party and at the same time finding weaknesses of political opponents, manipulation of language, political manipulation occurring in the area of interpretation of law ("what is not forbidden is allowed", "activities on the border of law")¹⁷.

In the electoral struggle manipulation is a method, which is eagerly used by those competitors, who can not count on satisfying social support, those who can not reveal their true intentions or may not be understood by voters¹⁸.

The phenomenon of manipulation needs to be critically evaluated, particularly in the context of the implementation of its objectives. This method should be eliminated from the behavior of politicians. For this purpose, self-appraisal of own attitudes is necessary, particularly in relation to the generally adopted system of values where the basic criterion

¹⁴ See: J. Fras, *Język propagandy politycznej* [in:] *Teoria i praktyka propagandy*, red. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, J. Fras, B. Ociepka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1997, s. 97.

¹⁵ See: M. Tokarz, *Argumentacja, perswazja, manipulacja*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2006, s. 294.

¹⁶ See: M. Karwat, *Sztuka manipulacji politycznej*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2001, s. 19.

¹⁷ Ibidem, s. 21.

¹⁸ See: A. Czajowski, *Wyborca na rynku politycznym* [in:] *Marketing polityczny...*, s. 129.

– is distinguishing between good and evil. Manipulation leads directly to immorality¹⁹.

The third type of social engineering transfer are facilitation activities. This is all about providing realistic situations that may increase the chances of success in shaping the views and attitudes of people. In these activities the reciprocal influence of the members of the group is used to stimulate the behavior of a particular type. Affecting people, not just individually but by taking advantage of the influence of the groups which they belong to, may lead to behavior which cannot be caused by individual actions.

Manipulation and persuasion play a key role in politics, becoming an indispensable tool in the game for high stakes. There are plenty methods of impact. Not all processes that are used by manipulators will be presented here. In this paper we will discuss these, which seem to be most useful in the political sphere.

The methods

The method of false choice is used when a politician shows several points of view. The follower of social engineering shows to the subjects of manipulation opinions consistent with his views but in more positive colors. The method of false choice uses the feeling of comfort given by the possibility of making choice by the recipient, even though the one is apparent. In the case of public speech it can be a change in the pitch of voice. In the case of a written text it will be highlighted. The method of stultifying consists in making the fool, by the manipulator, of these ideas that not acceptable for him and which he wants to eliminate. The method of obedience to authority claims that usually we succumb to the authority of so-called release of obedience mechanism. Mechanical succumbing to the authority means succumbing not only the person representing the authority but to the symbols too (e.g. academic titles, business titles, clothes, cars)²⁰. The mechanism of authority is used in politics in order to manipulate the recipient because reaction of subordination does not always occur in justified cases.

The mechanism of authority is often deviated. This is called the “halo effect”. It consists in transferring the attributes of authority from one group of matters to other group. According to the principle: “who is an expert in one area is expert in other areas too, despite the fact that he may not be an

¹⁹ See: J. Muszyński, *Leksykon marketingu politycznego*, Wydawnictwo ATLA 2, Wrocław 2001, s. 51.

²⁰ See: A. Podgórecki, *Zasady socjotechniki...*, s. 137.

expert at all”²¹. Therefore, for a politician, who takes part in the election campaign and wants to gain positive opinion of voters, it is worth showing that he is a somebody positively associated by a respected person.

The method of direct lie– manipulator lies, however, is trying the fraud to seem to be likely and therefore combines lies with facts (intensify the power). Election campaign is a special time. Then it is clearly visible see that a politician can hide the truth or give false information with impunity. Even repeatedly discovered lie, does not lead to consequences²². We therefore consider, that a rare lie is an instrument of politics in democracy²³.

The method of transfer, also known as the method of relocation, consists in matching conclusions of manipulator with the positive concepts that are stored in the consciousness of recipients of the information. The method of independent opinion refers to the presentation of certain of views. Politician gives the impression, that does not care about convincing the recipients to it but in fact he wants to achieve desired target. The method of negative advertising, “throwing mud at your opponent”, especially at the electoral broadcast. The negative advertising is characterized by a strong persuasive attack on position of the rival. The negative advertising discloses weaknesses of the competitor with the help of documented facts. However, very often, the information is “trumped up”. The purpose of negative advertising is deteriorating the image and position of the rival in favor of the sender’s message. The essence of negative advertising is to strengthen relationship between the candidate and the recipient, by means of traits that arouse anxiety, fear, opposition²⁴. The method of selection is based on the selective presentation of facts, concealing relevant information to support your vision. With this method, the message is one-sided, the possibility of debate is dropped. The method of majority’s opinion – manipulator presents the ideas, beliefs that he believes the majority of the population support. The follower of social engineering argues that all “our people” share the same opinion. Whenever we follow the general opinion or immediate environ-

²¹ See: R. Cialdini, *Wywieranie wpływu na ludzi, teoria i praktyka*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 1994, s. 212-213.

²² See: T. Tyszka, *Psychologiczne pułapki oceniania i podejmowania decyzji*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 1999, s. 53-54.

²³ See: P. Pawełczyk, D. Piontek, *Socjotechnika w komunikowaniu politycznym*, Instytut Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa UAM, Poznań 1999, s. 101.

²⁴ See: C. Ferguson, *The politics of ethics and Elections: Can Negative Campaign Advertising Be Regulated in Florida?* [in:] Florida State University Law Review, cited by: A. Stępińska, *Skuteczność negatywnej reklamy politycznej* [in:] *Kulturowe instrumentarium panowania*, red. R. Paradowski, P. Załęcki, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2001, s. 187-188.

ment instead of your own opinions we are dealing with this method²⁵. The method is included in the facilitation activities those which facilitate transmission of information and achievement of the objective. The method of repetition of slogans. The slogan properly constructed and easy to remember is well assimilated. The author of slogan wants to popularize it quickly and strongly in the group he wants to influence. These activities are designed to establish a specific relationship with voters, who are attached to certain values. Electoral slogans and the names of committees are the way of presenting the vision of political party or candidate. Slogans allows you to consolidate everything that is important to the sender of message²⁶. The method of emotional backgrounds – circumstances in which the transfer takes place play the key role. Special attention is paid to the atmosphere and the location. The social engineering transmission should take place in an environment which arouses positive feelings. The method of applying obstacles is used to distract the recipient's attention by means of deliberate action. As an example we can use the destructive influence of noise which first and foremost consists in diverting and distracting attention²⁷. It is worth mentioning that also factors such as too high or low temperature in the room, too cramped (crowded) space or even unfavorable weather conditions during transmission organized outdoor can effectively disrupt the message and distract recipient's attention.

In turn Henryk Kula claims that the most important social engineering techniques include: 1) global attack tactic which is applied in relation to political decisions which bring dramatic changes, 2) small steps method in which a human even after rejecting the arguments incompatible with his opinion completes it with existing system of acquired opinions, 3) identification tactic based on linking a sender with a recipient e.g. through common profits, 4) irradiation method which consists of interacting by the context in which a problem is shown, 5) method of repetition, in public perception, a repeated message takes the qualities of credibility²⁸.

Above set of social engineering methods shows that they do not have to have manipulative character. Even where this manipulative character occurs

²⁵ See: T. Trejderowski, *Socjotechnika. Podstawy manipulacji w praktyce*, Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury ENETEIA, Warszawa 2009, s. 59.

²⁶ See: A. Seklecka, *Wojny i konflikty kandydatów w wyborach samorządowych roku 2006* [in:] *Socjotechnika w polityce – wczoraj i dziś*, tome II, red. A. Kasińska-Metryka, K. Kasowska-Pedrycz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno – Przyrodniczego Jana Kochanowskiego, Kielce 2009, s. 69.

²⁷ See: L. Wojtasik, *Psychologia propagandy politycznej*, PWN, Warszawa 1986, s. 322.

²⁸ See: H. M. Kula, *Propaganda współczesna. Istota – właściwości*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2005, s. 159-162.

e.g. in repetition technique, pathological phenomenon does not begin until the true information is repeated, which by frequent repetition in different forms and aspects gains the feature in truth in public perception. Irradiation method may include manipulative effect when it is overused in order to misinform recipient about the real political profile of the candidate. Global attack tactic is acceptable in political fight as long as it does not have a form of the negative campaign, that is way it is more difficult to assess negatively the tactic of "small steps" carrying eligible type of reaction on social awareness²⁹.

Manipulative techniques are, in this part of the work, actions which are aimed at managing information that can bring effects desired by manipulator. The technique of reciprocity is one of the most common rules in human cultures. Also in politics it is used very frequently. "What goes around comes around" – this folk adage refers to psychological regularity³⁰, which demands from a person to return a favour they get. People unwillingly do deeds as first but return good deeds with pleasure. Elective representatives of the nation very often get engaged in favors exchange, what makes the politics world incomprehensible for an average person. Yet, if an MP does not vote in accordance with his party or his own views, it may be a form of returning a favour to the other politician. The reciprocity rule becomes visible through several statutory precautions against putting this rule into effect³¹. Political parties are not allowed to accept, for their election campaigns, amount of money exceeding legally defined.

The low ball technique is a manipulative method which takes advantage of expectations and plans of message recipients. As a result voter may vote for this politician he did not intend to at the beginning. The technique is based on activating the mechanisms of engagement and consequence. It consist in making an offer which seems to be more attractive to a subject. Then, when the subject engages cognitively and emotionally it turns out that the situation is not as beneficial as it was originally said. New information largely reduce attractiveness of the offer. Regardless of it the subject continues activities³².

²⁹ See: J. Jaskiernia, *Postawy wyborcze ukształtowane w wyniku oddziaływania socjotechnicznego* [in:] *Socjotechnika w polityce – wczoraj i dziś*, tome II, red. A. Kasińska-Metryka, K. Kasowska-Pedrycz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno – Przyrodniczego Jana Kochanowskiego, Kielce 2009, s. 56.

³⁰ See: M. Tokarz, *Argumentacja, perswazja, manipulacja...*, s. 295.

³¹ See: R. Cialdini, *Wywieranie wpływu...*, s. 40.

³² See: D. Doliński, *Techniki wpływu społecznego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2008, s. 116.

The technique of the foot in the door consists in approaching the target with small steps. Firstly, the message recipient is asked for a small favour and then for much bigger help. Usually, a person who agrees to do the first favour, will be more willing to do the next one. In other words convincing the recipient to make a smaller concession increases chance of making bigger concession by the recipient³³.

The technique – door in your face (refusal – withdrawal)³⁴. This technique is also called “withdrawal from the grinding position”³⁵ and it is reverse to foot in the door technique and consists in asking the recipient for a big favour to do at the beginning in order to achieve doing a small favour at the end. This rule is efficient since when the recipient rejects doing a favour he feels as if he was committing some kind of crime what raises his guiltiness³⁶. This course of action can be less effective in the case of political campaigns which voter associates with a clear try of changing his behavior³⁷. The technique of bait and change is successful when it is really difficult to convince a person to get into interaction. The technique of good and bad character (it is about two or more people engaged in the game) is supposed to convince the recipient to make a statement on a topic he did not want to air about. This method is more often used against politicians rather than by themselves. As an example we can use public debates conducted by two journalists. The reversal technique in political practice is used among political rivals who accuse one another during political campaign. A politician tries to provoke his opponent to confirm the information which make him look bad. In this case very important role is played by mass media which are used as means of articulating charges and statements³⁸. In politics very single piece of information is important, especially the one which concerns potential voter³⁹. The interpretation of citizen’s behavior is done on the basis of market segmentation process and gives the reason for projecting marketing oriented political campaigns⁴⁰.

³³ Ibidem, s. 415.

³⁴ See: R. Cialdini, *Wywieranie wpływu...*, s. 64.

³⁵ See: W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa psychologiczna*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2005, s. 414.

³⁶ See: M. Tokarz, *Argumentacja, perswazja, manipulacja...*, s. 299.

³⁷ See: W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny...*, s. 415.

³⁸ See: M. Pabijańska, *Psychomanipulacja w polityce. Metody, techniki, przykłady*, Wydawnictwo ASTRUM, Wrocław 2007, s. 56.

³⁹ Ibidem, s. 54.

⁴⁰ See: R. Wiszniewski, *Wprowadzenie do teorii marketingu politycznego* [in:] *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa psychologiczna*, red. W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2005, s. 57.

Conclusions

Presented methods and techniques are supposed to raise suitable emotions and change attitudes, behavior and views of voters during the election campaign. In other words they are means of achieving social targets.

Above methods and techniques do not constitute the whole variety of manipulative techniques applied in the interpersonal communication, there are a lot of countless tricks that exist and there are many more still awaiting for being discovered.

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