

Khaled Ehsan

Exploring Power Dynamics of Religious Leaders

The Need for Objectivity

“The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics” – Bertrand Russell (1938, 10)

1 Introduction

While power is the result of action, it is also, in turn, a condition for the possibility of action. Action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all but is the one activity which constitutes it. Acting together in concert is constitutive of the public, political realm in which action itself takes place. Insofar as one's identity as an actor is only fully realized in and through action in the public, political realm, and the public political realm is constituted by power, it makes sense to see power as a condition for the possibility of (the full achievement of) agency. It is, therefore, important to recognize that power dynamics set the tone at almost every level of human interaction. They influence individual actions, shape an organization's approach to engaging its members, and even guide the ways in which a government treats its citizens, responds to dissent, and enforces reforms. We all internalize and externalize power relationships in unique ways; yet our individual differences are often perceived through shared assumptions about power passed down to us by the histories of our own societies and individual experiences.

Foucault wrote that power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault 1980, 30). The importance of power, according to him, was its substantive effects on individual and collective behaviour or practices in general. Thus, although power emerges out of individuals acting together, it also makes possible such collective action by providing the space within which such actions can be carried out. And, insofar as power is constitutive of public space, it also serves as a precondition for agency, since one's identity as a religious actor, for instance, can only be fully achieved through action in public.

When evaluators use value claims based on religious symbols or texts as part of criteria for assessing the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding,

they have to make certain assumptions.¹ This inevitably involves – to a considerable degree – subjective judgements by the evaluators. Although the potential value-ladenness of such criteria has been extensively problematized in evaluation literature, it has not so far led to a systematic strategy for analysing this value-ladenness with reference to the underlying role of power. In a similar vein, one could try to fully apply – even if that were possible in a particular conflict situation – some of the ‘suggested’ and hard to apply OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria (OECD ND) as an alternative to the five standard criteria (i.e. Linkages, Coverage, Consistency with peacebuilding values, and Coherence). While these might prove useful at some level in helping to analyse the conflict and peace environment and specifying the peacebuilding ‘needs’, they do not allow us to readily appreciate either the power differentials within the peacebuilding regime, or the power differentials among religious leaders.² I try here to explore this issue – how to effectively link objective evaluation measures to the relevance of power dynamics among religious leaders using social anthropological and sociological frameworks, where the concept of ‘self’ or ‘self-identity’ as well as notions of the ‘other’ are part of social construction that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality whereby people rationalise their experience by creating models of the society they belong to and share and reify these models primarily through language and other symbols.³ I argue that for religious leaders to be agents of social and political change towards peace and coexistence, a reconceptualization of power and power dynamics and a critical discussion about the consequences and limitations of instrumentalist approaches in evaluative work are needed. Based on the foregoing analysis I offer some suggestions on how to incorporate a conceptualization of power and power dynamics in evaluation and how it may be used to help inform programme design or further studies.

2 How Values, Principles and Assumptions Shape Objectivity

Before embarking on the power dynamics among religious leaders, there is a need to clarify what we actually mean by values, principles and assumptions in so far as they relate to objectivity in general and evaluation criteria in partic-

¹ See, for instance, the concepts of “Merit” and “Worth” in Steele and Wilson-Grau (2016).

² For example see Ofir (2017)

³ For example see Berger and Luckmann (1966).

ular – especially what is sometimes referred to as ‘consequentialist’ OECD DAC evaluation criteria – or mainstream evaluation practice. This is relevant because the terms values, principles, and assumptions are sometimes used as if they all mean the same thing – the underlying truths on which we base our dealings with the world. In fact, although they are all “truths” to some extent, they are different in meaning and substance. Understanding the difference can help us sort out when we’re operating on facts or well-examined experience (objective criteria), when we’re applying moral or ethical rules or judgments and/or symbolic values (mainly subjective or supernatural criteria), and when we’re responding to emotion or bias or unexamined “knowledge” that may or may not be accurate.

Values are our guidelines for living and behaviour. Each of us has a set of deeply held beliefs about how the world is or should be. For some people, that set of beliefs is largely dictated by a religion, a culture, a peer group, or the society at large. For others, it has been arrived at through careful thought and reflection on experience and is unique. For most of us, it is probably a combination of the two. Values often concern the core issues of our lives: personal relationships, morality, gender and social roles, race, social class, status and the organization of society, to name just a few.

Principles, on the other hand, are the fundamental scientific, logical, or moral/ethical “truths,” arising from experience, knowledge, and (often) values, on which we base our actions and thinking. They are the underpinning of our understanding of the truths that shape both our reasons for taking action on something, and the action itself. Scientific and logical principles are derived from experience and experiment, from knowledge (which itself comes from experience and experiment on the part of someone else), from logical analysis, and/or from theory.⁴

Moral and ethical principles are where values come in. These principles grow out of deeply held beliefs and values and are often the principles upon which peacebuilding and/or humanitarian work is founded. Devotion to democratic process, to equity and fair distribution of resources, to a reasonable quality of life for everyone, to the sacredness of life, to the obligation of people to help one another – may be in adherence to injunctions or commandments from a “Higher Being” or Deity; for many such injunctions come from religious ideas and precepts, while for others, for instance, atheists, they are simply part and parcel of humanism. Yet, all these ideas do not necessarily come from logic or scientific experiment, but from a value system that puts a premium on things that range from notions of human dignity and relationships to transcendent re-

⁴ See Webster Dictionary (2020).

ligious knowledge, laws and principles. At the same time, people may hold the same principles, but interpret them through different value systems. Two individuals may both believe, for instance, that all humans are created equal. For one, this may mean that she has a duty to treat everyone as an equal, and to try to gain equity for all. For the other, it may mean that since everyone starts out equal, anyone who doesn't achieve or do well is at fault for his or her failure, and therefore deserves no help or respect.

To be sure, even scientific principles are, to some extent, based on values (Kuhn 1962). The use of the scientific method, the adherence to empirical evidence (i.e. evidence actually observed or experienced), the willingness to believe the evidence even when it conflicts with religious or cultural assumptions – these are all characteristics of a value system that puts a high priority on logical and scientific thinking and on the pursuit of a kind of knowledge in the real observable world. However, many people around the world subscribe to different values, which place much more importance on religious or cultural traditions and see the work of science as of a lesser order when it conflicts with those traditions. Thus, for instance, there are a number of practicing Christians and Muslims worldwide that do not necessarily believe in evolution theory.

This brings me to the notion of assumptions, which are the next level of truths, the ones we feel we can take for granted, given the principles we have accepted. If we accept, for instance, that life is an “inalienable right” – a right of every human being that cannot be taken away – then we will usually assume that killing another person is wrong, or at least that we don't have the right to do it. Assumptions are often unexamined. They are the facts or beliefs that we don't question, because we “know” they're accurate, even though they may not be. It is nevertheless true that we all bring assumptions to what we do, and the context of interreligious peacebuilding work is no exception. We hope our assumptions are based on carefully thought-out principles and try to re-evaluate them from time to time to make sure we are not operating on false premises.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary ‘assumption’ is something that you accept as true without question or proof. For instance “People tend to make assumptions about you when you have a disability” or “These calculations are based on the assumption that prices will continue to rise”.⁵ Assumptions are sometimes made by evaluators when they have different spatial, temporal or system scales that need to be bridged somehow. Assumptions can be made explicitly or implicitly. Often, an assumption explicitly made by the evaluator, automatically implies additional, implicit assumptions. There are at least three

⁵ See Cambridge Dictionary (2021).

reasons why we need to deal more explicitly with assumptions: first, assumptions can lead to biased evaluations (value-ladenness mentioned earlier), secondly, assumptions can limit the quality of results in evaluations, and thirdly, dealing more explicitly with assumptions can improve certain uncertainty assessment practices in evaluation. Since assumptions by definition cannot be objectively determined (since something is assumed), there always is an element of subjectiveness in assumptions. Two analysts assessing the same issue will not necessarily make the exact same assumptions in the calculation chain. Consequently, an evaluation is not made up of objective, value-free scientific facts alone. For this reason, virtually all evaluations of social groups and institutions can be considered to be value-laden to a certain degree and, as such, they seldom reflect an exact science.

Numerous studies from the history and sociology of science have problematized the classic distinction between facts and values since Kuhn's influential work highlighted above. Scientific facts and knowledge claims, especially when produced at the science-policy interface, have been shown to be at least partially socially constructed and co-shaped by implicit or explicit negotiation processes. Observation has been shown to be theory-laden and cognitive authority of science is ultimately produced by boundary work and negotiation at different levels. Attention is paid to the assumptions that are made and to the communication with regard to these assumptions. Thus, although the value-ladenness of assumptions has been extensively problematized in evaluation literature, this has not so far led to a systematic strategy for dealing with this problem. The central question here is how assumptions in peacebuilding interventions of the implicit influence – power – of religious leaders and their actions can be systematically identified, measured, and prioritized, in order to assess the potential value-ladenness of important assumptions and to deal with these potentially value-laden assumptions in an explicit and transparent manner.⁶

For this purpose, we need to zoom in on the value-ladenness of assumptions, starting from the viewpoint of the evaluator carrying out the evaluation. In many instances it has been shown that choices made by an evaluator are affected by a range of factors. The choices are influenced by knowledge, perspectives and situational factors. Arbitrariness can also play a role, in situations where the evaluator has no reason to prefer one particular assumption to another. Based on the nature of factors influencing the choice for a certain assump-

⁶ See, for example, Nkwake (2015). In this fascinating study we see many examples showing how assumptions can be coloured through the eyes of the evaluator and lead to a biased evaluation.

tion, one can distinguish four different types of value-ladenness of assumptions: value-ladenness in a general epistemic sense (e.g., assumptions are coloured by the approach that the evaluator prefers), in a disciplinary-bound epistemic sense (e.g., assumptions are coloured by the discipline in which the evaluator was educated), in a socio-political sense (e.g., assumptions may be coloured by political preferences of the evaluator), and in a practical sense (e.g., the evaluator is forced to make simplifying assumptions due to time or other mundane constraints). At first glance it may look strange that we include constraints having practical reasons in the typology of value-ladenness, but assumptions that are justified by a practical constraint can still lead to biased assessments as there is a potential to exploit references to such constraints to introduce assumptions that favour a politically desired outcome of an assessment. Also in case that there is no intentionality, practical constraints can introduce assumptions that lead to assessment results unduly favouring one position in a discourse over another.

A recent meta-review of ‘Interreligious Peacebuilding Program Evaluation’ undertaken by the Alliance for Peacebuilding critically looked at the design aspects of ‘seven evaluations that assessed programs in six different countries, conducted by a total of 15 different organizations.’ The main objective was to ‘assess the “state of play” in evaluation of inter-religious action’ so as to improve methodologies in peacebuilding evaluations and evidence-based policy and practice. While nearly half of the evaluations reviewed included questions or data sources specifically related to various inter-religious initiatives, these were not free from selection bias that distorted the findings of these evaluations:

Only three evaluations used religious leaders as main data sources, although those leaders were also the direct beneficiaries of the programming. Unfortunately, the evaluations that did ask questions about changes in attitude or behaviour through inter-religious programming still suffer from many of the problems discussed in this report; data points were mostly self-reported through interviews and in two cases a survey, and little effort was put into triangulating that data with other methods. Future areas of interest in this area would be to explore theories of change in inter-religious programming. (Vader 2015)

In such cases in addition to a focus on theories of change in inter-religious programming, it is important to stress the need for extended peer review, in which stakeholders and citizens are involved in the review process of evaluation results where facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent. In summary, it can be concluded that transparency, diversification of assumptions, extended peer review, and insight into the influence of assumptions on the outcomes of the evaluation are seen as important elements in a strategy for dealing with value-laden assumptions. A relatively simple method for analy-

sing explicit and implicit assumptions in the calculation chain is to follow three basic steps in evaluation design: an analysis step, in which the assumptions are identified and analysed; a revision step, in which the evaluation is altered or extended based on the analysis results; and a communication step, in which it is determined what should be communicated with respect to the assumptions in the evaluation, based on the analysis. The relational aspects between values, principles and assumptions and their significance in evaluation and in defining sources of power dynamics and indicative measures are further elaborated in the subsequent sections.

3 Changing Role of Religious Leaders and Institutions

Taken collectively religious communities are the largest and most deeply imbedded institutions in the world, claiming the allegiance of billions of followers that often cuts across race, class and nationality. More than any other kind of representation, religious leaders often have the experience of establishing and leading such communities. Their expertise can greatly benefit the global peace efforts; they are often the most respected figures in their communities. For instance, Buddhist monks and nuns, imams, pastors, priests, pujaris, and leaders of different religious communities play a powerful role in shaping attitudes, opinions and behaviours because their followers trust them.

In most societies worldwide, community members and political leaders listen to religious leaders. Especially at the family and community level, religious leaders have the power to raise awareness and influence attitudes, behaviours and practices. In many ways, they are shaping social values in line with faith-based and religious teachings that are relevant to social cohesion and peace-building initiatives and practices. More importantly, religious leaders and institutions also have the power to advocate and support public policy on a number of issues that may be directly or indirectly related to social cohesion efforts to bring people together using interreligious dialogue, such as:

1. Mobilise youth and other groups towards peaceful coexistence.
2. Bring religious dialogue into different kinds of organizations to promote tolerance, diversity and pluralism.
3. Magnify the voices of the marginalised and/or poor when and where laws and policies are made.
4. Influence policymakers to put in place policies that protect marginalised groups.

5. Advocate to relevant government and other institutions not to support or create policies likely to contribute to divisiveness in society and/or discrimination of certain people.
6. Make it harder for certain religious leaders or institutions to promote extremism, intolerance and hate speech for political reasons.
7. Speak out for sustainable development as they are well placed to add their moral and spiritual leadership to local and global efforts.

These are just some emerging issues where they can make a significant difference. Efforts towards promoting dialogue on such issues imply that to be more impactful, they must be able also to participate in the formulation of public policies; get involved in relevant function in governmental administrations; work with non-governmental organizations; and represent their governments in international fora – all of which have significant capacity development implications to enhance their representation, leadership and influence in various areas of civic engagement. However, within this context, there is a need for a better integration of power variables and the role of religious leaders that for too long have been treated as opposing and contentious issues. I would argue that there is a difference between positive and negative uses of power by religious leaders and institutions and these are valid subject matters for any serious evaluation. The following perspectives illustrate this point quite clearly:

Case 1:

The crisis of leadership today in Nigeria provides a formidable challenge to political and other social scientists. Between 1999 and 2015 several elections have been held with many leaders elected and sworn into office; with interactions between religion and politics the ongoing subject of academic analysis...Political office holders often drew on religious ideas, practices and symbols as a tool of negotiation with the electorate during political campaigns. As a result, candidates were often selected based on their religious rhetoric and affiliations. Thus the debate about Muslim/Muslim or Muslim/Christian tickets emerged as a key issue in the elections. Religious leaders are often political actors in the elections. There were several media allegations that some religious leaders were complicit in compromising and corrupting the electoral process (Oguntola-Laguda 2015)

Case 2:

Multiple actors—from the Taliban leadership to local commanders—have played a key role in creating and shaping the movement's policy in Afghanistan. Taliban policymaking has been top-down as much as it has been bottom-up, with the leadership shaping the rules as much as fighters and commanders on the ground. The result is a patchwork of practices that leadership has increasingly sought to exert control over and make more consistent. This became possible as the Taliban put structures and mechanisms in place, particularly after 2014, to enforce compliance among its ranks. However, although the rules may be set at the top, local variance, negotiation, and adaptation is still considerable. Policymaking

has been driven by military and political necessity: the Taliban needed to control the civilian population and compel its support. Beyond this, a mix of ideology, local preferences, and the practical exigencies of waging an insurgency have guided policymaking and implementation (Jackson and Amiri 2019).

Case 3:

Fear, the pursuit of power, and an approach to public policy built on an unhealthy dose of nostalgia have plagued evangelical politics for a long time. Since the 1970s, the Christian Right has followed a well-known political playbook. Its members want to elect the right president of the United States who will appoint the right Supreme Court justices who will then overturn decisions that the Christian Right believes have undermined the republic's Christian foundations. In the past, this playbook was inseparable from the moral character of the candidate. In 2016, however, the Christian Right executed the playbook in support of a candidate known for his sexual escapades, nativism, deceit, xenophobia, racism, and misogyny. This is a new development. The playbook survived despite the candidate. This is a testimony to the playbook's power and the role that Christian Right leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson played in reshaping American political culture (Fea, Gofford, Griffith and Martin 2018).

Case 4:

Dilemmas of a secular state: The use of religion for political purposes was almost non-existent at the time of independence. Since the '60s, Indian politics has seen drastic changes in style, language, modes of behaviour, reflecting the actual cultural understanding of rural Indian society rather than the Western ideals of the elite which inherited power in the Nehru years. There are two consequences of this amalgamation of religion, politics and public administration. First, it has given prominence in public life to religious leaders like "saints" and "mahants", "imams" and "priests". They have started playing an active role in governmental decision-making. The interference of religious leaders in administrative matters can prove dangerous to India's secular democracy (Singh 2019).

It is worth mentioning here that Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India, now has Yogi Adityanath as its Chief Minister. His fiery brand of communal politics and promotion of the most virulent form of Hindutva reflects a new kind of alliance between Hindu religious leaders and the state under the BJP government.

Case 5:

The assessment of religion's importance in Myanmar's politics has now completely changed, as a violent and exclusionary religious nationalism appears to be on the rise across the country ... The violence has also coincided with the rise of Buddhist nationalist networks and organizations, including the 969 Movement and the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (MaBaTha, in its Burmese acronym), both groups with prominent monastic leaders or spokesmen (Walton 2015, 507).

In general, religious leaders have been known to use political tactics that arise from the use of different power sources, which are framed in the change litera-

ture either as dirty tricks to be avoided or as astute strategies for advancing a change towards peace objectives. Despite the underlying discomfort of many with the use of manifest individual charismatic power in evaluating the role of religious leaders, it is necessary to recognize that there is sufficient empirical evidence to suggest that more often than not such leaders frequently draw on these power bases to sustain their image and role in society.

Kadayifci-Orellana identifies three distinct levels for interreligious dialogue, namely high, mid and grass-roots levels that have certain strengths and limitations. The high level includes religious figures like the Pope, a Chief Rabbi, Mufti or Monk. Despite their high-profile visibility and credibility, such figures are not easy to access by others and are unable to devote themselves to the time needed for sustaining effective dialogue. Mid-level dialogue leaders include clergy as well as religious scholars. While they do not have the visibility or reputation of high-level leadership, they usually have strong links with both high- and grass-roots levels, making them ideal candidates for interreligious dialogue. The grass-root level dialogue leaders include, among others, ordinary community level clergy who can play a transformative role at this level, which is considered significant for ensuring lasting peace (Kadayifci-Orellana 2013, 155–156). What is singularly important here is that the distribution of power may differ from one level to another, from one type of religious leader to another; nevertheless, power remains an important tool in achieving their individual goals and objectives. Leaders must recognize their power, must know how to use it effectively and how to precede its positive or negative effects. By learning how power operates in society and various institutions, they are better able to use that knowledge to become more effective leaders.⁷

4 Framing Individual and Collective Power Dynamics

While the role of power affecting institutional change in society has been recognized as being important for many decades now in mainstream Social and Cultural Anthropology (as well as other disciplines), the conceptual thinking about the relationship between power and religious leaders in peacebuilding and inter-

⁷ It is worth noting that age and gender play a key role in the leadership of interreligious dialogue; it still remains a largely masculine activity since the most typical role in this category of leaders tends to be a male in most parts of the world, with perhaps a few exceptions where women are beginning to assume such role.

religious dialogue has only started to evolve and has been enriched by different underlying theoretical assumptions.⁸ To explore various different approaches to understanding power and change and the role of religious leaders, the analysis here has been structured around an approach that differentiates two different types of power, namely *individual charismatic* vs *collective structural* power. By conceptualizing these two fundamentally distinct but interrelated dimensions of power, various different aspects of institutional or transformational change can be appreciated. As highlighted in Table 1 below, they are not mutually exclusive, and most actions in society are based on a blend of these strategies whereby power is ultimately actualized through *force, influence or authority* (Gerth and Mills 1958, 249–250). The tension between individual charismatic and collective structural power is well articulated in social science literature and informs the earliest developments in theories of organizational power. Giddens describes it in the following way:

One is that power is best conceptualized as the capability of an actor to achieve his or her will, even at the expense of others who might resist him—the sort of definition employed by Weber among many other authors. The second is that power should be seen as a property of the collectivity (1979, 69).

This tension rests on dualisms in social theory such as between volunteerism and determinism or between individual action and structure (e.g. Reed, 1988). Proponents of the individual agency perspective argue that individuals have free choice to pursue and use power wilfully towards some intended objective. This perspective deals with observable and intentionally used authority and legitimate power of agents. Personal power is required to make change happen in organization or society. This view is rooted in a social psychological research tradition that investigated power bases. The two perspectives and the change implications I review are not fully comprehensive, yet they offer an interesting outlook on how we assess the role of religious leaders in the interreligious dialogue field. Moreover, they do not exclude each other but can be used in combination in reviewing or evaluating institutional change processes in peacebuilding efforts. I am relying on the notion of polarity to help us analytically review certain differential aspects of power; rather than assert the dominance and legitimacy of one aspect of power, the notion of polarity suggests that opposites necessarily co-exist.

⁸ See, for example, Haynes 2001, McDuie-Ra and Rees 2010, and Moksnes and Melin (eds.), 2013.

Table 1: Sources of Power Dynamics

Individual Charismatic Power vs. Collective Structural Power	
Individual Charismatic Power	Collective Structural Power
Basis of Power: Exceptional personal attributes, such as heroism, mysticism, revelations, or magic; charisma allows a person to lead or inspire without relying on set rules or traditions.	Basis of Power: Economic Power is based upon an objective relationship to productive resources, a group's condition in the labour market, and its chances; it refers to the measurement of the ability to control events by virtue of material advantage. Social Power is based upon informal societal or community opinion, family position, honour, prestige and patterns of consumption and lifestyles that may sometimes take precedence over economic interests. Political Power is based upon the relationships to the legal structure, party affiliation and extensive bureaucracy. Political power is institutionalized in the form of large-scale state systems and bureaucracies that are usually controlled by elites or select, privileged groups.
Both source of power underpinned by values, principles, assumptions, beliefs etc. actualised as power through force, influence and authority	

On the collective side of the debate are those who say that the social structure (e.g. roles, rules, and resources) determines, or at the very least constrains, the use of power. They argue that structurally determined power can explain behaviours in organizations and societies that were previously attributed to individual qualities. Others suggest that culture (e.g. values, principles, assumptions, beliefs etc.) constrains individual agency. From this perspective, power is a property of a social group and sources of power are shaped by the observable structures and taken-for-granted culture of the collectivity. An interpretative worldview and studies of culture by social anthropologists and sociologists, for instance, have led to an increased understanding that power also resides in the more latent or subtle and unobtrusive operation of language, symbols, myths, and a range of other meaning-making activities.

In this latter perspective the focus shifts towards the less observable and unconscious forms of power use. Central issues here from a practical view are the construction of perceptions, values, and norms through identification and management of meaning. At the level of deep structures of power, certain issues and conflicts are prevented from arising at all and the existing order of things is seen as natural and unchangeable. If power operates in an invisible or latent way, then questions of resistance and acquiescence are surfaced. Foucault (1977)

and other postmodern theorists have also echoed this, deepening our understanding of power and its invisibility in dominant discourses.

5 Individual Charismatic Power

This is one of the best understood and widely shared conceptions of power and is primarily informed by Weber's conceptual framework as well as the work of other scholars such as Dahl (1975). According to Weber charismatic power or leadership implies extraordinary characteristics of an individual, whose mission and vision inspire others and who might also be seen as possessing certain religious 'qualities' or 'power' that could be used to lead any social or political movement. However, charismatic leadership is considered relatively unstable as it is related to faith and belief; once these diminish, the authority and leadership also tend to dissolve. Thus, charismatic power or leadership depends on the extent to which a religious or political figure is able to maintain moral influence over his followers (Gerth and Mills 1958, 53). Basically, from this perspective we say power is a force: person A has more power than B to the extent that A can get B to do something they would not otherwise do.

Apart from social anthropologists and sociologists describing power bases of individuals in society, where power is viewed as the potential ability of an individual agent to influence a target within a certain system or context, social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven created a typology of power sources – all of which are both manifest and identifiable. They were concerned with two fundamental questions: i) how do people lead, guide, direct, influence or control other people? And ii) what methods do they use? In a study published in 1959 they proposed five bases, or sources, of social power that people use in leadership: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, referent power. A sixth, informational power, was later added by Raven. According to them "The phenomena of power and influence involve a dyadic relation between two agents which may be viewed from two points of view: (a) What determines the behaviour of the agent who exerts power? (b) What determines the reactions of the recipient of this behaviour?" (French and Raven 1959, 150). Their approach, which was primarily focused on how people run organizations or corporations, have proved to be equally relevant to individuals and institutions in society at large. Their idea of social influence and power is that "social influence and power is limited to influence on the person, P, produced by a social agent, O, where O can be either another person, a role, a norm, a group of a part of a group" (French and Raven 1959, 151).

Based on their famous analysis Table 2 below defines the power that derives from expertise, legitimate authority, referent power, rewards and coercion, and informational power that requires association with other powerful people. Reward power increases with the magnitude of the reward, the bigger and better the award, the more that P perceives O can mediate for him. Reward power depends on the ability of the giver to administer positive feedback and remove negative outcomes and responses. Coercive Power is the same as reward power, only it uses negative cohesion instead of positive, it uses punishment instead of rewards. French and Raven say that “the strength of coercive power depends on the magnitude of the negative valence of the threatened punishment multiplied by the perceived probability that P can avoid the punishment by conformity, i.e., the probability of punishment for nonconformity minus the probability of punishment for conformity” (French and Raven 1959, 157). Legitimate power is the most complex of the different types; it is induced by some internalized norm or value. It stems from internalized values in one which indicates that another has a legitimate right to influence one who is obligated to accept this influence. The main basis for this power is the cultural values that one individual has over another. Referent Power is a feeling of oneness of one with another, or the desire to want this identity. If someone is attracted to something about someone else, that person will want to become closely associated with that person. Expert Power is the strength that knowledge and perception which one person attributes to another within a given area. Expert power results in primary social influence on one’s cognitive structure and probably not on other types of systems.

Table 2: Elements of manifest individual charismatic power

Basis of Power [Generic evaluation criteria]	Sources and Definitions [these include positive or negative values, principles and assumptions]
Coercion/Reward Power	Behaviours that reward or hurt others but also ensure compliance and buy-in
Legitimate Power	Formal position of power and roles that define responsibilities and appropriate scope of activity
Referent Power	Power that comes from trust and commitment given to the individual because of his/her personal traits and characteristics, including notions of an authentic existence or belief system
Expert Power	Power as knowledge and skills that others see as relevant to the peace process and which the individual religious actor is seen as possessing
Informational Power	Association with powerful people affords direct and indirect information

It is important to note that all five sources of power either rely on, or are strengthened by, belief of the followers. The actual power that leaders possess in granting rewards, punishing, or issuing orders is significant, but not as significant as the beliefs that followers have about them. Even if leaders do not truly have the power to reward, punish or control others, they can exert influence if their followers believe or *assume* they have such power. The same is true of the two forms of personal power – Expert Power and Referent Power. The leader may not have superior expertise, but if his followers believe he has, they will grant the leader power over them – at least for a while.

Similarly, if the leader is not someone to be trusted, followers will let him lead if they've been fooled by a positive image – until they discover he cannot be trusted. A key point here is that power does not depend only on the leader; it depends also on the perceptions that the followers have of the leader. The taking and giving of power stems from a relationship between leader and follower, and how the followers perceive the leader. Let us now turn to the attributes of Legitimate Power and Expert Power from Table 2 as they reflect the most relevant variables for religious leaders working in peacebuilding contexts.

5.1 Legitimate Power

A religious actor who is also an authority figure might be able to use his authority and effect changes by using legitimate position power. Such power stems from the religious actor's formal position and implies the legitimate authority to use, if deemed necessary, positive and negative sanctions such as rewards and coercion. Thus, legitimate power mostly refers to the existing organizational or institutional hierarchy that provides religious leadership with the ability to control the behaviour of others and to either change the organizational structure and processes or maintain status quo. This use of power is observable and direct. In order to employ sanctions it is necessary to know to what extent such religious leaders perform the required actions.

The power embedded in formal organizational structures and processes are usually directed at domination. Decision-making is often based on the exclusion of others and the one-sided realization of interests of certain specific groups or individuals that may or may not use such power-coercive strategies to enforce change. When a religious leader is protected by his legitimate power in a social system and is able to use certain sanctions, he could, in principle, use power-coercive strategies to effect changes that he considers desirable, without much questioning on the part of those with less power. In these situations a power-coercive way of decision-making is accepted as in the nature of things and is seen

as functional for the state. The limitations of this power model of change are related to the strong top-down approach, where there is limited participation of others – even from the religious community.

5.2 Expert Power

Expert power as the main basis of power usually involves a process of change that is often initiated, coordinated, and controlled by people's perceptions of religiosity, spirituality or magical attributes of an individual, including religious leaders, who may be seen as a leader attempting to promote peace. As a change agent the religious actor is seen to play this important role where success depends, among other things, on his religious 'knowledge' and 'experience' to assist or support groups in the peacebuilding process. The educational background of the religious actor also seems to be connected to the way problems are analysed and solved. Here, a key element of the strategy depends on religious knowledge as a legitimate source of power. The desirable direction of influence is from the religious experts, that is, from those who know, to those who do not know through processes of dissemination of information and rational persuasion.

Sometimes the problems with the expert power approach to change lie in an insufficient consideration of the cultural and other political impediments and the emergence of resistance to positive change within the specific peacebuilding context. In such a situation a religious actor might develop an explicitly political strategy that begins with a complete assessment of all the potential manifest-individual power bases highlighted in Table 2. This might ultimately lead to a process where the religious actor aligns himself with those in power and then influence them to desire and accept the changes towards peace. To do this, he or she must convince the powerful that the change is in their self-interest. In general, religious leaders as change agents can employ many tactics, such as increasing their referent power by expanding their social networks and having lunch or coffee with key people. Becoming an assistant or staff adviser to board members in government, for example, can enhance personal expert power through advice giving.

Understanding personal power and developing tactics for using it, however, are not always enough and constant monitoring of the political activities of others is required because this will allow the religious actor to develop, adapt, and modify his/her political strategies based on carefully selected goals. A power audit, identification of targets, an inventory of tactics, adequate resources, and monitoring with a commitment of time and energy are key ingredients for successful implementation of a peacebuilding process.

In other words, it is critical for religious leaders to begin with an understanding of the sources of power for himself and exploration of the mechanisms by which such resources may be controlled and used tactically within the peacebuilding process. A wise religious leader will manage the impressions he creates in order to generate stature and will form multiplex relationships with key figures in the political arena. Timing of interventions and building of credit are two key political tactics that will build on identified power bases and these include aligning with powerful others, using a neutral cover, limiting communication, and withdrawing – as necessary. One might also argue that while they can either play down politics or avoid them, it is better to use them to effect ends that are going to positively impact on the peacebuilding process.

5.2.1 Spiritual and Symbolic Considerations

Within the notion of Expert Power, there are latent power elements that require further clarification; some evaluators may see these elements as distinct or intrinsic to the role assumed by religious leaders. However, in what I am calling spiritual and symbolic considerations there is recognition of the deep and pervasive operation of religious symbols that often, if one takes these at the level of the psyche, are connected to what many consider to be spiritual or sacred elements. While there is no one school of thought in this area, there are efforts by many to apply the insights that grow out of recognition of latent personal power using various subjective evaluation criteria⁹. This approach to change sometimes uses interventions that work at the level of the unconscious in ways that engage the myth-making processes of the society or culture within which the peacebuilding process is located. Methods for engaging the deep meaning systems drawing on psychological and other disciplines are being explored to enhance understanding and integration. However, addressing the unconscious and spiritual aspects of religious dimensions simply cannot be framed in objective terms; by their very nature they must remain subjective, making comparisons extremely difficult, if not impossible.

This perspective on power has its roots in the psychoanalytic, postmodern theories (Thompson 2004). It is not a look at how structures or cultures constrain agency but how individuals themselves come to limit themselves and to unquestioningly obey. Here, there is the assumption that power is inherently diffused and shared among individuals located anywhere within a social system. This dif-

⁹ See for example the chapter by Steele and Wilson-Grau in this volume.

fusion allows individuals to potentially become active agents who can deploy their power even if they are at the bottom of the hierarchy or relatively powerless. Second, implicit in this approach to power is the recognition that power relations are often latent or even unconscious and they then become embedded in the actual psyche of the individual. To the extent that an individual is unconsciously complicit and has internalized various mechanisms of control and obedience is the extent to which their freedom to act according to (or even to know) their own values and beliefs is constrained. From this perspective, for example, members of oppressed groups could be asked to understand or explain how they collude in maintaining the very systems that oppress them.

Alternatively, as suggested by Foucault (1977, 27), the disciplinary mechanisms of the dominant groups also play a part through the use of surveillance, examination, and normalization in ways that are so subtle that people may not readily realize that they have internalized them into a type of “panoptic consciousness”. This aspect of disciplinary power according to Foucault may even become normalized overtime in shaping people’s self-image or identity, further contributing to power as a means of ‘keeping tabs’ on people and controlling them.

In the face of these types of latent control mechanisms, there are a number of sources of power, which can be mobilized by the individual. Some of these have been identified in Table 4 with certain indicative measures. For example, attempting to be authentic and acting in congruence with one’s own values and beliefs. This involves not only honestly identifying one’s powerlessness and complicity with the dominant systems but also owning one’s taken-for-granted power and privilege. Authentic existence requires those with power and privilege to make this explicit and then act on the consequences of this unearned advantage. Another source of deep personal power is the development of a critical consciousness that Freire (1970) defines as a perception of the social, political, and economic contradictions inherent in society.

It is assumed that an attitude of focused scepticism and critical detachment is necessary if an individual is to utilize latent-personal power. Only by standing outside the dominant discourses and seeing how one has unconsciously carried them within himself can he unlearn these mechanisms of power. Through a process of questioning and de-familiarization, one can replace an attitude of deference to power with an ability to make autonomous choices. Often the ability to develop a detached and sceptical attitude is facilitated by exposure to other systems and styles of organizing, for example, from outside the society of which we are members as well as outside our own religion. Experiencing contradictory structural principles will often allow us to move in directions that are in contradiction to the dominant cultural or social rules of which we are a part. Hence, the role of interreligious dialogue – whereby individuals can ‘import’

the experiences they have with other external institutions with different beliefs, rules, values, and resources – becomes all the more critical to help religious leaders and their followers develop a critical consciousness.

6 Collective Structural Power

Social relations are characterized by a typical structure and culture, based on rules, habits, institutions, language, communication, use of symbols, and definitions of reality, which serve as a foundation. Culture represents relative stability in a society and is related to power because power relations come to be seen as natural and unquestionable. Perceptions, cognitions, and preferences of individuals and groups are shaped by culture that, in turn, prevents them from seeing alternatives. Thus, cultural artifacts, language, rituals, and values construct meaning for members of a society, including those who simultaneously work to suppress conflict, prevent issues from being identified, and control, the actual agenda for decision-making and non-decision-making. In these ways, power relations become entrenched in the society and those who can set the agenda, who manage the meaning systems and who have others believe their definitions of reality, have more power than those who do not. Thus, power is increased to the extent that the group, which defines reality has others accepting their definition in unquestioning and taken-for-granted ways.

In this perspective on power the emphasis moves away from personal power that is ascribed to the individual, towards an understanding of the power that rests in the position or location that an interest group, community or organization holds in society. Thus, power potentially belongs to any collectivity in a particular structure regardless of their members' personal traits or characteristics already described above. There are various underlying dimensions that determine collective structural power bases; Table 3 simply highlights the three key ones first proposed by Weber (1958), namely *Economic Power*, *Social Power* and *Political Power*. Here, structural factors become the major influence in understanding power relations, where both cooperation and competition are seen to characterize relational networks of interdependent groups. As such, these could also be used as the main evaluation criteria since social and political issues are influenced by them.

The existing structure and the distribution of power are often characterized by stability, which usually results from a commitment to decisions or interests of those holding power. This kind of structural power is believed to be natural or 'given' while still being largely latent and observable if appropriately evaluated. In societies, there is a balance of power between the interests of individuals and of the in-

Table 3: Elements of manifest collective/structural power

Basis of Power [Generic Evaluation Criteria]	Sources and Definitions linked to positive or negative values, principles and assumptions
Economic Power – Control of scarce resources	Ability to allocate resources (information, uncertainty, money, people, etc.) among groups with competing interests
Social Power – Criticality/relevance	Roles and tasks that are essential in the peacebuilding process and that have the potential to cause the process to break down
Social Power – Flexibility/autonomy	Positions that are characterized by discretion in decision-making that are not always visible in the public sphere
Political Power – Visibility	Positions that are seen by those of power and influence in the society, community or organization
Political Power – Coalitions	Power that comes from building support from groups with similar interests

terdependent groups. Sometimes these interests are at odds and this can result in conflicting political issues, objectives and controversies in decision-making. The tension between the interest of individuals and groups is viewed as inevitable and as a normal part of the way of getting things done. This perspective on power is also known as the pluralist view, which is related to the exchange theory in social psychology in which the power of an actor is derived from the possibilities this actor or his or her group have of providing others with relevant resources.¹⁰ The implication here is that groups have to cooperate and that agreement between them is necessary for their functioning and to warrant their continuity. Negotiation and exchange of resources tend to characterize the power process.

7 Applying Power Dynamics in Monitoring and Evaluation

A postmodern perspective can be usefully applied to identify and respond to power dynamics in monitoring and evaluation. It can also help oppressed or marginalised groups attempt to reveal, expose, deconstruct, and question the ideological assumptions embedded in organizational discourses and show how they suppress conflicts. From this perspective, power is assumed to be taken-for-granted and latent. Some would even argue that it is a cultural artifact that becomes entrenched in the hands of certain dominant and privileged

¹⁰ See, for example, Homans 1961; Blau 1964; and Strauss 1969.

groups. This dynamic exists to the extent that the meaning systems in which the relations of power are embedded are shared collectively by various interest groups and are reproduced through discourses, practices, and routines within societies. Religious leaders have the opportunity, perhaps more than others, to give meaning to events and in doing so contribute to the development of peaceful norms and values in a crisis or conflict situation. In some ways, this could be seen as the management of meaning as a process of symbolic construction and value-use designed both to create legitimacy for one's own peaceful demands and to de-legitimize the non-peaceful demands of others.

Management of meaning involves the ability to define the reality of others. Thus, religious leaders can be powerful agents who could create shared meanings, ideas, values, and reality through communication and the manipulation of symbols where power is seen as an interpretative institution and pervasively hegemonic. Lukes (1974) argues that sometimes people accept the status quo and their role in it because they view the current systems as natural and unchangeable. The role of ideological hegemony is important to understand as we see that existing organizational and societal structures are supported by inherently classed, gendered, and raced assumptions and values.

In recent years there has been increased interest among certain international NGOs to focus on 'power' as an analytical tool for monitoring and evaluation. Oxfam, for instance, offers extensive case studies of successful policy, advocacy and learning initiatives around the concept of power that are based on four key strategies:

1. Learning how a political system works to understand what need to change to address an identified problem, who has the power to achieve change, and how to achieve change.
2. Designing, framing, timing and adapting the presentation of evidence to the changing context to maximise its influence on target audiences.
3. Using additional insider or outsider strategies to influence policy and practice.
4. Embracing trial and error.¹¹

Other organizations have utilized *power analysis mapping* or *drivers of change* approaches to evaluate the different levels of power that may exist among stakeholders in an intervention. Most of these efforts have focused on power dynamics

¹¹ "Oxfam and its partners have been effective at evidence-informed policy change, usually as part of wider alliances and networks. It uses evidence to influence policy and to understand how to do so more effectively, via evaluation and lesson-learning" (Mayne, Green, Guijt, Walsch, English and Cairney 2018).

in multi-stakeholder processes in order to develop a common understanding of how issues relating to power and privilege act as barriers as well as opportunities in societies.¹² But so far there are few cases where power variables or criteria have been explicitly used as a methodological tool for conducting evaluations. Most of these approaches are related to international NGO programmes concerned with human rights, accountability for marginalised groups, and the assessment of civil society strengthening and participation. However, there is no justification for not extending and adapting these approaches to objectively assess the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding. Power dynamics discussed so far requires our applying a framework for context analysis and strategizing in evaluation that could significantly contribute to more nuanced readings of reality and to the refinement of strategies or the consideration of new entry points for programmatic action.

To be sure there is no single approach to undertake power analysis in an evaluation, as it fundamentally depends on the scope of the evaluation and context. However, the answers to the following key questions can offer useful information to help develop an evaluation strategy around power dynamics of religious leaders:

1. What is the purpose of the proposed power analysis?
2. What kind of power analysis is required, why and how will it be used?
3. What actors and relationships do you need to understand?
4. What are the core issues and questions that need to be explored?
5. How to link such issues and questions with indicative measures?
6. What forms of power need to be considered?
7. What can be learned from existing studies?
8. What approaches and methods will be helpful in establishing baselines?
9. What process will enable voices and perspectives of religious leaders and other stakeholders to be included?
10. What political sensitivities are there likely to be in undertaking such an analysis and how will these be managed?
11. What people, time and resources are available?
12. What is the proposed evaluation timeline and how does it fit with the consultation process?
13. How can the process of power analysis build staff competencies, or improve the skills and understandings of other key actors involved with the evaluation process? (e.g. consultants, partners and participants)

¹² See, for example, Magaña, Castillo, Spotnitz and Piña 2017; DfID 2005; and Brouwer, Hiemstra, Van der Vugt and Walters 2013.

The criteria developed by French and Raven can be used once there is clarity with regard to the above. Power is dynamic, so individuals and groups may experience it differently from one moment or place to another. In order to identify opportunities, obstacles and risks for effective peacebuilding it is critical to understand how power works, who it benefits and how it can be changed. The criteria can help to explore power variables among religious leaders, including their multidimensional sources, both in terms of individual charismatic power and collective structural power, where each has distinct implications in so far as evaluation finding is concerned. Some of the sources of indicative measures highlighted for individual charismatic power and collective structural power in Tables 4 and 5 respectively are well developed and tested. Others are newer and emerging as we struggle to create change in peacebuilding contexts that are embedded in complex, latent, subtle, and fragmented power relations. Understanding the broader peacebuilding change process requires attention to both the individual charismatic and the collective structural dimensions of power to help us analyse how religious leaders participate or resist, adapt or rebel to bring about change with reference to these two notions of power.

While contradictory in fundamental ways, if a situation can be looked at first from the lens of the individual vs. collectivist views, then rich new potential for change can emerge and be enabled. As evaluation of peacebuilding contexts becomes more uncertain, varied and complex and the mechanisms of power both more entrenched and more difficult to understand, it is fair to say ignoring the dimension of power or having an uni-dimensional and undifferentiated approach to power has serious limitations to how we look at the role of individuals in general and religious leaders in particular.

As shown in Table 4, sources of indicative evaluation measures for different types of power should be linked to an analysis of basic strategies utilized by religious leaders; the analysis should clarify the underlying dynamics or power constellations that make such leaders behave in certain ways. The aim is not to sort out all underlying motives or constellations, but rather to identify factors that are central to those leaders that have the ability to influence dynamics and developments within the society. Religious leaders' influence in terms of power base, intentions and goals should be identified. Preferably, they are to be divided into either connectors with positive impact, or dividers with negative impact on the specific context or conflict. Thereafter, the indicative measures need to be developed and systematically monitored overtime.

As power dynamics hold the keys to societal transformation, it is important to recognize the polarities or dialectics of power within peacebuilding evaluation, i.e. we need to specifically focus on the tensions created by such a multifaceted conceptualization. Given the difficulties of transformational change and

Table 4: Sources of indicative measures for manifest individual charismatic power

Basis of Power [Generic Evaluation Criteria]	Basic Strategies	Sources of Indicative Measures
Coercion/Reward Power	Accumulating or disseminating things of value to others or punishments which can harm others	Data/perceptions on coercion and reward being applied by religious leaders, whether at personal or im-personal level
Legitimate Power	Ensuring roles and role expectations are clear and recognized as legitimate; demonstrating focused scepticism and critical detachment	Data/perceptions on political status and/or formal official title or position of religious leaders influencing legitimacy of reciprocity; individual capacity to refuse; make choices to take action against oppressive elements of reality as it is constructed
Referent Power	Build respect and trust through personal integrity, charisma, and group affiliation; being able to work in ways that reflect one's own and experience and which take into account both power/privilege and powerlessness/oppression	Data/perceptions on individual character, awareness and charismatic qualities; data/perceptions on demonstrating both personal power and powerlessness
Expert Power	Obtaining credentials or ongoing experiences that others respect and/or consider divine/magical; showing critical consciousness – engage in a deep learning process which facilitates a search for religious internalization of political issues/awareness (e.g. theatre of the oppressed, liberation education, notions of justice, well-being, equity, human rights)	Data/perceptions on religious/spiritual/ magical attributes, credentials or powers; leader's perception on social, political, and economic contradictions and inequities with reference to mainstream ideas of beliefs; leader's ability to stand apart from the dominant discourses, micro-practices, and disciplinary mechanisms to overcome deference to power
Informational Power	Networking and developing connections and associations	Data/perceptions on scale and scope of informational networks being utilized

the complexities of power, we are challenged to name and understand the multiplicity of approaches to change. If we can value and celebrate differences and nurture alternative change potentials, we are more likely to enable transformational change. If, however, we rely on one set of assumptions about change or, worse yet, suppress, deny, or devalue some perspectives, then the status quo is actually reinforced.

Additionally, power analysis can be used for looking back at moments of policy or political change and drawing lessons on why things changed and what can be learned for the future. The monitoring and evaluation of power dynamics of religious leaders needs to be based on strategies to engage effectively in their own policymaking environment, such as to identify which policymaking ‘venues’ are making key decisions, and the rules of those venues in so far as the engagement of religious leaders is concerned with reference to both individual charismatic power and collective/structural power.

In Table 5 each power variable is a generic evaluation criterion that corresponds to a distinct set of strategies for which sources of indicative measures are highlighted. The latter, in turn, can help formulate the development of specific pre-determined indicators for enhanced objectivity in assessing efforts or actions not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice. It is critical that the indicative measures are based on principles that are as “objective” – as free of bias, untested assumptions, etc., and as firmly based on provable fact or reasoned analysis – as they can be and are considered true until proven otherwise. However, indicators can only help to point out to what extent progress has been made in an intervention or a desired change is happening; they are not to be taken as ‘proof’ of change because they cannot tell us why an intervention has made a difference or why and how change occurs. That requires substantive analysis of the specific context or issue being evaluated. Moreover, indicators are sometimes used to support a predetermined position for political or tactical reasons. Ideally, indicators should be used as a tool to illustrate concepts, helping to change the understanding of an issue. They should be used to measure the impact of certain decisions, and when used to measure effectiveness, they should be instrumental in changing policies. Otherwise, they are redundant.

In this sense, indicators developed through power analyses can be inextricably linked to a function of monitoring and evaluation leading to observations on what has happened or is happening, what is being done about it and what could be done better. While the proposed analytical framework around power typologies and their sources are sufficiently flexible and can be applied to different categories of individuals and groups in society, it provides useful markers or generic evaluation measures – in addition to the standard OECD DAC Criteria – to effectively assess leadership role and power dynamics of religious leaders in peacebuilding and other contexts. Each of the power-based criteria represents fundamentally different sets of assumptions, implications or what might be called paradigms of power, and some or all of the generic evaluation criteria may be applied, depending upon the scope of an evaluation.

Table 5: Sources of indicative measures for manifest collective/structural power

Basis of Power [Generic Evaluation Criteria]	Basic Strategies	Sources of Indicative Measures
Economic Power – Control of Scarce Resources	Obtain and maintain positions which are responsible for distribution and allocation of resources; reveal (or establish) repeated processes for resource and task allocation which leave certain assumptions unexplored and unquestioned	Data/perceptions on distribution and allocation of resources; data/perceptions on mundane, historically instituted processes and tasks which benefit certain groups over others, but which are not questioned
Social Power – Criticality/Relevance	Obtain positions responsible for the most critical roles and tasks essential to key peacebuilding and/or survival goals; Use organizational procedures and events to symbolically signal which issues are important and how decisions will be made	Data/perceptions on roles and tasks of religious leaders in upholding peace; data/perception on control of the language, symbols, rituals, and values which are culturally embedded, and which unconsciously determine behaviours
Social Power – Flexibility/Autonomy	Seek out roles and tasks that are not routine and that contain autonomy and room for independent decision-making	Data/perceptions on level of flexibility and independent decision-making by religious leaders
Political Power – Visibility	Seek out roles and tasks which have high profile in the society, community or organization; control of the agenda – cultivate power which comes from being able to define the issues which are important and will be acted on	Data/perceptions on visibility of religious leaders and institutions among major powerbrokers and influential groups; data/perceptions on direct attention and energy towards peace which align with own group's interests (these are likely to alternatively suppress or generate conflict)
Political Power Coalitions	Systematically seek support from others based on an analysis of their interests; the determination of what is 'sayable' (known) through the construction of discourses and discursive practices within coalitions	Data/perceptions on level of support received by religious leaders from others; data/perceptions on issues being made visible and prioritized, giving voice to alternative/suppressed knowledge claims and challenge the objectification of knowledge claims of certain (sometimes dominant) groups

Furthermore, as well as revealing different options for change, applying power dynamics in monitoring and evaluation also calls on change agents in general to personally ask different questions of themselves and their role. The questions

change, for example, from what should be done to improve the situation? Or how does one get key leaders or constituencies on the side of peace? To whose meaning systems are we to support? And how do people perceive a given role – whether it is secular or religious? If a change effort is seen as an intervention in the peacebuilding process, how does a religious leader's role impact on these processes and towards what ends? Unless such issues are sincerely addressed, chances are that change agents could lose their power by being seduced themselves into the worldview of the powerful. A key proposition here is that any peacebuilding negotiation outcome is a function of the context the negotiators find themselves in and the characteristics of the negotiators themselves. Contextual characteristics are fixed elements of the negotiation environment, e.g. dialogue functions between the parties, time pressure, whether negotiation occurs through a third party, or bilaterally. The fact that the concept of power lies at the confluence of multiple fields in the social sciences, it is necessary to understand how power is leveraged (sometimes even increased) by religious leaders to their advantage and the contingencies of when conflict is a blessing and a curse for a person or institution.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of what is being suggested here is that tough questions must be addressed, bearing in mind the relevance of values, principles and assumptions underpinning such questions. For example, when the manifest perspectives on power are identified in a given peacebuilding context, whether at the individual or collective level, it becomes necessary to change our language and address questions of oppression, inequity, abuse, neglect, collusion and accountability. Yet such language is not often found in the discourses of traditional peacebuilding evaluation literature.

8 The Importance of Objectivity in Dialogue and Negotiation for Change

Conflict management and negotiation tend to characterize the change approaches or models that draw on both manifest individual charismatic and collective structural aspects of power described above. Hence the basis of these aspects of power can also be used as critical objective evaluative criteria to assess change in peacebuilding contexts. All interest groups play their roles in the change process, based on their position in the society or community, their specific power sources, and their own interests. In change processes, both the structure and systems of the community or society and the balance of power are brought up for discussion or negotiation. In such a process, different groups

or coalitions will direct their attention at securing their interests, objectives, and power positions.

Resistance to change is seen as a result of the exercise of power and can be understood as a struggle to achieve power or to escape from it. The main agents in the peacebuilding process focus on preventing conflict in the change process by regulating participation of the groups involved or by negotiation about the objectives of the change process and the way it is organized and managed. Most peacebuilding strategies imply that a change agent sets the conditions for the way change is realized by providing the material or other means. Positive outcomes are for parties who accept the change. The exchange strategy appeals to the comparison of costs and benefits parties make and it stresses what will be gained by the change. Negotiations are directed at smoothing opposition, tensions, and differences in opinion between parties and the goal is to accomplish an agreement that does justice to the interest of all involved parties. In such a change process, most of the negotiations are visible and parties are aware of the power processes. In the negotiations, many of the power bases described above are used to secure a good starting position and to influence the process by building good arguments, getting control of scarce resources, coalitions, gaining a position of visibility or flexibility, or controlling the procedures.

Religious leaders, like political leaders, may not always possess the necessary amount of structural power, but they can certainly use their power bases to win conflicts and to strengthen their position in the negotiation process. This increases the chance that their interests are realized at the expense of the interests of other parties involved in the change process. The use of positive spiritual or religious values and principles, as part of an exchange strategy aimed at negotiations, seems suitable in politically charged peacebuilding situations. If multiple parties with opposing interests and relatively balanced power are involved in a change process, negotiations will be needed to come to an agreement about things such as goals, the way the change is going to be implemented, and the role of the different parties in the change process.

Yet, the pluralist view has been criticized by some scholars because it suggests or assumes that all involved parties can defend their interests in the negotiation process. The power embedded in formal structures in societies generally tend to support the interests of the most powerful than those of others. Organizational structures, rules, regulations, procedures, decision-making, and negotiation are seen as products and reflections of a struggle for control that puts the most powerful in a privileged position (Giddens 1979). In the critical modernism of Habermas (1984), which takes the ideal of emancipation through dialogue, knowledge is seen as having the potential to counteract the realities of domination and allow for emancipation based on unrestricted freedom. This can be ach-

ieved by critical reflection and independent thought and by way of thoughtful evaluation of various viewpoints and arguments in an open dialogue. It is assumed that in dialogue and open discussions, based on good will, rational argumentation, and questioning, consensus can be reached about desirable objectives. Learning with a strong emphasis on participative design and development and democratic dialogue are approaches to change that can be used in the sense that Habermas intended. However, some people use these methods in a way that explicitly recognizes the latent power dynamics inherent in dialogue while others ignore power and attempt to use the methods in a power-neutral or blind fashion.

Ultimately, what is of critical importance is ensuring that objectivity is maintained in evaluating the contributions of religious leaders and institutions in peacebuilding outcome – taking into account the underlying realities, especially the power dynamics of a given context. This means paying special attention to the question of ‘construct validity’, and it is a challenge in all impact evaluations. In peacebuilding it is more difficult because here outcomes (e.g. governance, reconciliation, trust, cohesion) usually tend to be ‘hard-to-measure’ in quantitative terms, which is where experimental approaches tend to focus their attention. However, it should be emphasized that objectivity is a means rather than an end in itself. Improved decision-making should remain the ultimate goal. Thus, greater objectivity should ideally be promoted as part of the overall evaluation planning process to ensure policy relevance and practical application.

9 Conclusion

Ideas from postmodernism, social anthropology, sociology and social constructionism offer new perspectives that could be usefully incorporated into analyses of power dynamics in peacebuilding evaluation. When we include them, we must also ask questions such as change towards what, and towards whose ends? It is, however, naive to assume that because we do not explicitly deal with these questions that they are not relevant and are not currently being answered in the silence. We often know whose power is currently being enhanced and we are learning how to expose silences in the dominant discourses. For instance, liberation education techniques, first used by Paulo Freire, are now being utilized in many other contexts to help individuals break silence and value their own experience and voice. Once silence is addressed, then we can also name the abuse and oppression that is being ignored. Likewise, this type of dialectical model challenges change-agents, including religious leaders, to ask whose interests

they are serving, what ends are served through their interventions, and how aware are they of their own internalization of existing power relations and their own unconscious privileges?

Thus, addressing power dynamics within the context of interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding should be considered a key characteristic of credible evaluation – regardless of whether it is a process evaluation looking at implementation issues, an outcome evaluation investigating changes in peoples' knowledge, skills, attitudes, intentions, or behaviours, or an *impact* evaluation trying to determine any broader, longer-term changes that have occurred as a result of an intervention. New approaches and evaluation criteria need to be developed from the margins as well as lessons learned from the application of the standard OECD/DAC criteria. The question of how to link interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding to power dynamics will continue to increase as the role of religious leaders and institutions become more prominent and extensive overtime.

In conclusion, I want to re-emphasize the importance of holding both ends of the polarities in dynamic tension in order for transformative change to be understood and enabled. For example, groups and individuals must engage in deconstruction and resistance at the deeper levels in order to reveal oppression and raise awareness. But to make meaningful change, it is also necessary to use the surface sources of power and change strategies associated with restructuring and personal action. The manifest sources of power must inform the latent and the latent inform the more manifest. Likewise, individual agency must be mobilized while simultaneously acknowledging the role of the collectivity. Religious leaders can work as active agents, but we also need to understand the constraints and limits imposed by the systems of which they are a part. We must also understand how power is concentrated in the hands of the dominant groups and through understanding of shared oppression and privilege look at how subordinated groups can work together collectively and politically to create change. I am proposing this as a way of informing and enriching our understanding. Recognizing the complexity, diversity and relevance of power sources and need for objectivity is obviously the first step.

10 References

- Alvesson, Mats. 1993. *Cultural Perspectives on Organizations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bamberger, Michael, Jos Vaessen, and Estelle Raimondo. 2016. *Dealing with Complexity in Development Evaluation*. Sage. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483399935>

- Baur, Vivianne E., Arnold H.G. Van Elteren, Christi J. Nierse, Tineke A. Abma. 2010. "Dealing with Distrust and Power Dynamics: Asymmetric Relations among Stakeholders in Responsive Evaluation", *SAGE Journals* 16(3): 233–248.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday.
- Boje, David M. and Grace Anne Rosile. 2001. "Where's the power in empowerment? Answers from Follett and Clegg". *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 37(1): 90–117.
- Becker, Howard, S. 2017. *Evidence*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: Transaction Publishers.
- Bloch, Maurice. 1989. *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*. London: Athlone Press.
- Bloch, Maurice. 2012. *Anthropology and the Cognitive Challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blum, Andrew. 2011. *Improving Peacebuilding Evaluation: A Whole-of-Field Approach*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace. Published June 2011. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR-Improving-Peace-Building-Evaluation.pdf>
- Burrell, Gibson and Gareth Morgan. 1979. *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*. London: Heinemann.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyer, Pascal. 2009. *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brouwer, H., W. Hiemstra, S. van der Vugt. and H. Walters. 2013. "Analysing stakeholder power dynamics in multi-stakeholder processes: insights of practice from Africa and Asia." *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* 9(3): 11–31.
- Cambridge English Dictionary. 2021. "Assumption." Accessed 20 February 2021 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/assumption>
- Castillo, Shya, Jeanine Spotnitz and Maricela Piña. 2017. "Understanding Power and Privilege in Evaluation", *Harder +CO Community Research*. Published 17 June 2017. <https://harderco.com/understanding-power-privilege-evaluation/>
- Chambers, Robert. 1997. *Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the First Last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Clegg, Stewart R. 1990. *Frameworks of Power*. London: Sage.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1975. "The concept of power." *Behavioral Science* 2:201–215.
- Daniel E. Esser & Emily E. Vanderkamp. 2013. "Comparable and Yet Context-Sensitive? Improving Evaluation in Violently Divided Societies Through Methodology." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (8)2:42–56.
- Denskus, T. 2007. "Peacebuilding does not build peace." *Development in Practice* 17 (4–5): 656–662.
- Denskus, Tobias. 2010. "Challenging the international peacebuilding evaluation discourse with qualitative methodologies." *Evaluation and Program Planning* 35 (1), 148–153.
- DfID. 2005. *Using Drivers of Change to improve aid effectiveness*. London: UK Department for International Development.
- Doorewaard, H. & Brouns, B. 2003. "Hegemonic power processes and team-based work." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 52(1):106–122.

- Fea, John and Laura Gifford, Marie Griffith and Lerone Martin. 2018. *Evangelicalism and Politics*.
- The Organisation of American Historians. Published November 2018. <https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2018/november/evangelicalism-and-politics/>
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- French, John R.P., & Bertram Raven. 1959. "The bases of social power." In *Studies in Social Power*, edited by Dorwin Cartwright, 259–269. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Gaarder, Marie and Jeannie Annan. 2013. *Impact Evaluation: Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Garland, Diana R. and Vicki Marsh Kabat. 2009. *Power and the Christian*. Waco: Baylor School of Social Work.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gerth, Hans H., and C. Wright Mills (eds. and trans.) 1958. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society (Vol. 1)*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Hamilton, Gary G. and Nicole Woolsey Biggart. 1985. "Why people obey: theoretical observations on power and obedience in complex organizations." *Sociological Perspectives* 28(1):3–28.
- Haugaard, Mark. 2010. "Democracy, Political Power, and Authority." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* Johns Hopkins University Press (77)4:1049–1074.
- Haynes, Jeff. 2001, April. "Transnational Religious Leaders and International Politics." *Third World Quarterly*, (22)2,143–158.
- Homans, George. 1961. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.
- Jackson, Ashley and Rahmatullah Amiri. 2019. *Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy* Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace. Published 19 November 2019. <https://www.usip.org/index.php/publications/2019/11/insurgent-bureaucracy-how-taliban-makes-policy>
- Kadayifci-Orellana, S. Ayse. 2013. "Inter-Religious Dialogue and Peacebuilding" In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* First Edition, edited by Catherine Cornille, 149–167. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://interfaithindia.org/wp-content/themes/interfaithindia/reference/IIDI-Inter%20Religious%20Dialogue.pdf>
- Karam, Azza. 2017. "The Role of Religious Leaders in Implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals". *Ecumenical Review*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lukes, Steven. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

- Magaña, Cristina, Shya Castillo, Jenine Spotnitz and Maricela Piña. 2017. "Understanding Power and Privilege in Evaluation." Harder & Co. Published 7 June 2017. <https://harderco.com/understanding-power-privilege-evaluation/>
- Margulies, Newton. 1972. "The myth and magic in OD." *Business Horizons* 15(4): 77–82.
- Mayne, Ruth, Duncan Green, Irene Guijt, Martin Walsh, Richard English & Paul Cairney. 2018 "Using evidence to influence policy: Oxfam's experience", *Palgrave Commun* (4) 122. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0176-7>
- McDuie-Ra, Duncan and John A. Rees. 2010. *Religious leaders, civil society, and the development agenda: The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion*. New South Wales: University of New South Wales
- Megan Grace Kennedy-Chouane. 2013. "Developing OECD DAC Guidance on Evaluating in Settings of Violent Conflict and Fragility." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (8) 2:110–115.
- Moksnes, Heidi and Mia Melin (eds). 2013. *Faith in Civil Society: Religious Leaders as Drivers of Change*. Uppsala: Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development.
- Morgan, Gareth. (ed.) 1983. *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Morrison, Elizabeth Wolfe and Frances J. Milliken. 2000. "Organizational silence: a barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world." *Academy of Management Review* 25(4):706–725.
- Neufeldt, Reina C. 2021. "Vying for Good: Ethical Challenges in Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding" in *Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue*, edited by Mohammed Abu Nimer and Renata Nelson, 53–76, Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Nkwake, Apollo M. 2015. *Credibility, Validity, and Assumptions in Program Evaluation Methodology*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- OECD. ND. Evaluation Criteria. OECD. Accessed 20 February 2021. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>
- Oguntola-Laguda, Danoye. 2015. Religion, leadership and struggle for power in Nigeria: A case study of the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae (SHE)*. 41. 10.17159/2412–4265/2015/225. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992015000200014&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en
- Ofir, Zenda. 2017. *Updating the DAC Evaluation Criteria, Part 1. Their Enduring and Endearing Influence*. Published 18 November 2017. <http://zendaofir.com/updating-the-dac-evaluation-criteria-part-1/>
- Paffenholz, Thania. 2016. "Methodologies in Peacebuilding Evaluations: Challenges and Testing new Approaches." *Special Issue Evaluation Connection, European Evaluation Society*.
- Paffenholz, Thania, Mohammed Abu-Nimer & Erin McCandless. 2005. "Peacebuilding and Development: Integrated Approaches to Evaluation", *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 2(2):1–5.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1996. "The Theory of Human Behavior in its Individual and Social Aspects." *The American Sociologist* (27)4:13–23.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1967 "Evaluation and Objectivity in Social Science: An Interpretation of Max Weber's Contribution." In *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, edited by Talcott Parsons, 79–101. New York: Free Press. (Originally delivered at the Weber Centennial, April 1964, Heidelberg.)

- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2010. *Developmental Evaluation. Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Pettigrew, Andrew M. 1975. "Towards a political theory of organizational intervention." *Human Relations* 28(3):191–208.
- Raven, Bertram H. 2008. "The Bases of Power and the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 8(1):1–22.
- Rossi, Benedetta. (2004) "Revisiting Foucauldian Approaches: Power Dynamics in Development Projects". *The Journal of Development Studies* (40)6:1–29.
- Reed, Michael I. 1988. "The Problem of Human Agency in Organizational Analysis." *Sage Journals* (9)1:33–46.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1938. *Power: A New Social Analysis*. Allen & Unwin, London.
- Singh, Rajkumar. 2019. "The use of religion in Indian politics and the floundering pillars of secularism", Narayan Mandal University, Bihar, India. Reprinted in *The Daily Star*, 1 December 2019. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/perspective/news/the-use-religion-indian-politics-1766164>
- Steele, David and Ricardo Wilson-Grau. 2021. "Transcendence and the Evaluation of Faith-Based Peacebuilding." In *Evaluating Interreligious Peacebuilding and Dialogue*, edited by Mohammed Abu Nimer and Renata Nelson, 137–168, Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Thompson, M Guy. 2004. "Postmodernism and psychoanalysis: A Heideggerian critique of postmodernist malaise and the question of authenticity." In *Way Beyond Freud: Postmodern Psychoanalysis Observed*, edited by Joseph Reppen, Jane Tucker and Martin A. Schulman, 173–202. London: Open Gate Press.
- UNDP. 2013. *Evaluation of UNDP Support to Conflict-Affected Countries in the Context of UN Peace Operations*. Published January 2013. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/6420>
- Vader, Jennie. 2015. *Meta-Review of Interreligious Peacebuilding Program Evaluations*. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects as part of the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium. Published August 2015. <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/meta-review-of-inter-religious-peacebuilding-program-evaluations/>
- Walton, Matthew J. 2015. "Monks in Politics, Monks in the World: Buddhist Activism in Contemporary Myanmar." *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, Johns Hopkins University Press (82)2:507–530.
- Wrong, Dennis H. 1968. "Some problems in defining social power". *American Journal of Sociology* 73:673–681.
- Webster Dictionary. N.D. "Principles." Accessed 20 February 2021. <https://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/principles>
- Yukl, G., Ping Fu, P. & McDonald, R. 2003. "Cross-cultural differences in perceived effectiveness of influence tactics for initiating or resisting change." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 52(1): 61–82.