

A Critique of the Power-Values Dynamics

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Abstract: A cursory thought on power and value might view the two concepts as having nothing to do with each other. But a deeper philosophical thought on the two concepts would reveal interesting relationships between the two concepts. Could political power endure for long if it is not anchored on some values? Could a value endure in a society if it is not anchored on some sort of power, political or transcendental? This unique but puzzling relationship is the focus of this work. Power is ultimately predicated on some values for the justification of its exercise. Values require some sort of force to become widespread, effectual and duly respected in the society.

It is a purely philosophical rumination on mundane concepts that are rarely dwelt on by everyday men in everyday life. The method of this work is intuitive and analytic. It would rely heavily on library researches and analyzed intuitions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of power seems so far removed from the concept of value. Powers is often about influence, authority, force and politics. Values on the other hand are often about mores, behaviors, morality, laws and religion. A cursory look on the two concepts might suggest no resonance between the two concepts. However, a critical appraisal of the two concepts would interestingly reveal that they are interwoven [1]. Power is the basis of life. Life itself is an expression of power. It is also an expression with inherent values. Wherever there is power, there are always values attached to it. Conversely, as shown in many cases, power fritters out when man ceases to place value on it. Power and values seem to be dialectically complementary [2]. Values cannot be effective without the force of power. Power without values often attracts resistance or indifference from the people. Power drives values and values uphold power.

The complementary dialectical relationship of power and values plays out almost in every facet of our existence. At the cosmic level, they are manifest as the gamut of things in the world exists because they can. What cannot exist definitely does not exist. Of course, what exists has value. That it can exist at all is a value of its own. But man has an anthropocentric view of reality. He measures all things in relation to himself. He is the ultimate valuator of reality. In the world, what man bequeaths value is of the value man says it is. Its importance depends on its value to man. Its power in the affairs of men depends on the value man has bequeathed it. Conversely, the value man bequeaths to things depends on the power and influence of those things in the affairs of men. This further highlights the unique relationship between power and value.

So, one cannot talk of power without talking of values because no phenomenon is adjudged to be powerful if it is of no value. In fact, it is the value that the phenomenon has that makes it powerful in the eyes of men. In the political realm, those who exercise power create values [3]. They usher in a new dispensation predicated upon their own values. The people they exercise power over adjust to embrace the values of the new power brokers. The level of cooperation the people give to the new power brokers depends largely on the extent to which the values of the power brokers agree with the preexisting values of the people. If their values are agreeable, the new power brokers would be generally accepted, and deemed to have legitimate authority. If on the other hand that the values of the new power brokers disagree vehemently with the preexisting values of the people, there would be widespread resistance to their exercise of power. The value attached to the exercise of such power would diminish, and those who exercise such power would be deemed as not having the legitimate authority to do so.

The following sections of this work will x-ray the unique dynamics of power and values in multiple facets of life, bringing to the fore, the peculiarities of power and the oversights that values perform over power.

I. What is Power?

The critical concepts in the definition of power are: ability, capacity, influence, control, and right or authority [4]. Power socially speaking is the ability to influence people to act in ways they may not act otherwise. In other words, it is the ability to exercise control over people. It connotes force. It involves imposing an extraneous will or mind over people. It is the ability to direct the course of events or the lives of the members of the community. It is the control of the modes of interactions in the society. Above all, it is about the leadership of the state. But power exists well beyond the social realm.

Ontologically, power is a fundamental reality. The ability of things to exist at all is an enormous expression of power. The cosmos is basically an expression of power. Power is energy. The cosmos is a manifestation of energy. Power is rooted in the very nature of the cosmos. Nature itself is an expression of power

II. POWERS THAT ARE OF ONTOLOGICAL ORIGIN

As stated above, power is ontological and social. Power is fundamentally an ontological reality. Man is an ontological being. Every social expression of power comes from the activities of man precisely because of his ontological status as

man. This buttresses the fact that power is ultimately an ontological reality. The following subtopics discuss power as an ontological reality.

II.1 Power in Nature

Nature is an expression of power. Nature so to speak holds both the softcopy and the hardcopy of reality. It is the design and build of things. The nature of a phenomenon encompasses its characteristics, which in turn express its behavior and capacity. Nature is ordered and self-sustained. This singular fact makes it the ultimate power. Every expression or manifestation of power takes place in nature. The power nature wields over man and the rest of reality keeps man in awe of nature. All human endeavors are geared towards controlling nature and adapting to nature. Nature wields enormous powers over the affairs of men. A powerful earthquake can put a city in disarray or force it to move beyond its boundaries. A volcanic eruption can erase an entire city.

Nature can disrupt the activities of man without warning. Man is perpetually adapting to the powers of nature. The laws of nature are ubiquitous. They govern every aspect of the life of man. Nature ultimately makes man to expire much to the chagrin of man. This expiration of man, nature does even in ways that are sometimes utterly erratic in the perception of man. Nature so to speak, is the ultimate power. It is interesting to note that nature also predisposes phenomena to be valuable by design. Some territories are more valuable than others because of their natural endowments. Conversely, some areas are considered less valuable because of their sparse natural endowments. A typical example is the desert.

II.2 Power as Energy

Energy is a manifestation of power. It is the power to do work [5]. It is the ability of things to act or power. It is the power in the cosmos. It can be converted from one form to another. Energy powers even the cosmos itself. Energy powers man. Man has to consume energy (food) to live and to do any other thing. Energy is the purest raw manifestation of power. It is dynamic power. It has significant implications even in the sociopolitical realm. A state needs energy to power the citizenry and to power its economy. Control of energy resources is a peculiarly significant issue in global politics. Russia cut energy (gas) supply to countries who opposed their invasion of Ukraine [6]. Wars have been fought for the control of energy resources: the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq [7]. Nations have become great from the control of energy resources. Nations have been ironically made miserable because of the politics that was visited on them because of the abundance of energy resources in their territory [8]. The value of energy cannot be overemphasized. It exerts such a great power in global affairs because of its enormous value.

II.3 Life Power

Life is energy. It is the power to be. It is not just the power to be, but also the power to be in a very special regenerative

way. Life is a man's highest power. Most of the time, it is a man's highest value. But sometimes, man willingly gives up his life for a value he deems higher. Life is so valuable to man because it is a man's primary value. The gravest way to take away power from a man is to take away his life. The need to safeguard his life pushes man to embrace so many values, and to accumulate so much power. Life is a man's most valuable possession. No matter the circumstance man seldom happily gives up his life.

II.4 Power of Species

The nature of some species confers certain powers on them; therefore, certain values. Man is the highest species of animals. Nature has endowed him with such elevated status. Man is the only animal that is capable of reflective thought. It is the animal with the highest level of intelligence. The very nature of his status gives him power over the rest of the animals. It gives man the value he has over reality. Among men, women are by species less physically powerful than males. All men do not share equal levels of intelligence; equal traits. This again creates a variance of power and value among men.

Some animals outrun others. A horse is valued for its speed and strength. A donkey is valued for its stamina. A dog is valued for its intelligence and ability to adapt with man. A lion is respected for its raw power. There are often different roles for men and women in the society. Peculiar characteristics of species give them certain powers and values. These have nothing to do with individual merits but as a result of the general attributes that define such species [9].

III. POWERS OF HUMAN ORIGIN

Beyond the powers that are of ontological origin, there are certain powers that are peculiar to man as a reflective and social animal. These are largely powers that are found in the society as a result of human activities and the operations of state institutions. They are discussed below in relation to the values they inspire.

III.1 Intellectual Power

The human brain is the greatest expression of intelligence observed in the world. It is a veritable source of enormous power. As the center of thought and reason, the brain is only tool that interprets and responds to reality. The more intelligence an organism has, the more valuable it is. Among humans, intelligence is a ranking factor. Those with higher intelligence quotient are likely to excel over those with less. Cultures with higher level of intelligence always respond to reality more intelligently and more effectively [10]. Hence, they are more developed and more powerful. Intelligence drives technical knowhow. Access to technology gives the key power in the competition for power in the comity of nations. The most technologically advanced nations call the shots on the global scene. They shape global politics and global economics. They set the values in global politics and social operations.

III.2 Social Power

The social realm is the scene of interpersonal interactions. The society has powerful ways of controlling its citizenry and regulating social interactions [11]. It sets laws, norms and systems of sanctions to regulate behavior. The society has its projected ideal behavior and its idealized way of life. Through a system of feedbacks and appraisal, it regulates behaviors and interpersonal interactions. The society grades its citizenry into social strata formally and informally. The different social strata exercise unequal social power in accordance to the gradations of their society. An elevated social status entitles the citizen to lots of privileges in the society. Each social status has peculiar values attached to it; and commands peculiar powers and influence. A very elevated social status opens the doors to opportunities that the average citizen may not dream of. Celebrities exploit their enormous social powers to wield so much influence in the society. The popularity that comes from such elevated social status becomes a phenomenon of immense value.

III.3 Political Power

The most potent manifestation of power in the human sphere is the political power. This is the authority of the state to literally order, command and regulate the behaviors of the citizenry. It is the power of leadership. Political power is of great value because it controls every aspect of human interactions in the society. People literally scramble for political power. They often join political parties, run for elective posts to gain power. Those in power ultimately decide which values of the society become laws. They pilot the affairs of the society and shape its worldview. No institution has as much power to influence the life of the individual like the state power. If those who manage the affairs of the state steer it to prosperity, the citizens will share in the prosperity in their individual lives. If they steer the state to calamity, things can become calamitous for the individual citizenry. The managers of state power regulate the interactions of the state with other states. They can sue for peace or make war. In all ramifications, their decisions, their actions and inactions affect the lives of the citizenry significantly.

III.4 Military Power

The nations who wield the greatest military might in the globe call the shots. They use their military might to bulldoze their way through in international affairs. They impose their values on those they deem fit even at the cost of war (As exactly happening right now in Ukraine). The only way a military power can be stopped is through a superior military might. Indeed, that's often the case. Those who wield such power are of immense value in international affairs. The five superpower countries literally control the world. They wield veto powers at UN's Security Council [12].

The colonization of Africa and the irreversible change of African traditional values systems to pro-Western worldviews took place not as a result of superior logic but as a result of superior military might [13]. The Islamization of Northern

Nigeria took place under the weight of a superior military sword. The missionaries succeeded in the Southern Nigeria not just because, the British ensured that the only way a citizen could get education was by embracing the Christian faith, they wielded superior military might. The social values of these areas have changed forever. Such is the value of military power.

III.5 Economic Power

A veritable form of power and source of value is the economic power. Marxist philosophy would see it as the ultimate determinism in the organization of the superstructure that is the state [14]. Resources are, and will always be scarce. Access to resources is an enormous source of power [15]. People who control the resources in a society ultimately control the society. They are often the people that can afford to run for political offices or sponsor their favored candidates into political offices. They also influence the legislations of the state to protect their interests. The level of economic power a citizen wields in the society often determines his status in the said society [16]. It also defines his lifestyle in the society since nothing is free. A man's purchasing power largely determines what he may do.

On the international scene, the nations that control most of the world's resources call the shots. Their robust economic power can sustain hefty military and diplomatic expenditures. They dominate the space in international diplomacy as they have the funds to sponsor a lot of things including wanton wars sometimes. Most of the times, these nations often push their values on the international scene because of the enormous economic powers they wield. Most wars fought in recent history have their roots in economic conflicts.

III.6 Physical Strength

Physical strength is a cherished value and veritable source of power. In the agrarian economy, especially in the absence of full mechanization, it is a very useful asset. Slaves were taken from Africa to work the farms in the Americas because of their physical strength. Though slavery has been phased out, physical strength continues to be sought after in the line of careers that require physical exertion. Physical strength is among the most sought-after traits in military recruits. Among bodyguards and bouncers, physical strength is highly valued. It is also very valuable for self-defense. Physical fitness is a cherished value for positive living. It is a valuable factor in most sports. In athletics, it is of key importance. From all perspectives, physical strength is valued in the society.

IV. WHAT ARE VALUES?

The key term in the definition of value is "importance". The value in values is the importance attached them. Dearness is the essence of values. It is an anthropomorphic expression. What is of value is what man deems as such. Man, basically maintains a functional relationship with the world. What man ascribes a value is often what is useful to him. Beyond usefulness, man is also an animal that reflects. He seeks

meaning in life. Unlike other animals, man does not live for the sake of living. He makes meaning out of his existence. This he does by a set of beliefs he lives by as principles. These principles express the values that are important to him. They guide his relationship with the world. His expectations from life, his understanding of the purpose of his existence, his understanding of his mission in life are all shaped by his values.

Values are the building blocks of character, our life pursuits, our attitudes to power and authority. They are the compasses that direct existence both at the individual and the state levels. There is no human activity that does not presume some values. Our relationship with the state is largely a function of values: ours and those of the state. The state like her citizens also has values it is committed to. The success of the leadership of the state largely depends to the extent they identify with the core values of the state. Values are the prime motivators. They inspire the actions of the state and the citizenry.

Personal Values and Social Values

Values can be grouped into personal values and social values. Personal values are largely the principles by which we conduct our personal lives. It pertains strictly to the individual and his vision of life. It is all about personal conduct. Personal values often have little or no bearing on power as it often does not look beyond the individual. It regulates the individual's private space. These values are ultimately the expression of the individual's character.

Social values on the other hand regulate the society as an entity. They form the culture of the society. The individual comes under enormous pressure to conform to them. These are values that drive the ideology of the state, inform the political culture and regulate interpersonal interactions [17]. Social values have enormous bearing on power. These are the values that regulate power. They give direction and cohesion to the state. They are at the core of the power-values dynamics.

Life and Value

Life is a greatly cherished value but the good life is the ultimate value. Although man will do almost anything to safeguard his life sometimes man willingly lays down his life for a value other than life [18]. History has shown that man has repeatedly placed more value on freedom than life itself. Sometimes people willingly give up their lives to save the lives of others. People risk their lives in war to defend their fatherland. Sometimes, people risk their lives for glory.

There is no doubt that life is a man's most valuable possession. However, there are times man is ready to forgo his life for values he holds dear. Sometimes man willfully ends his life in suicide if he considers it to be no longer worthwhile. Suffice it to say that man values the good life over merely staying alive. The good life would entail having his freedom

and leading a life that approximately meets his expectations of proper living.

The Dynamism of Values and Power

The whole essence of this study is to demonstrate that power and values are interwoven. Power depends on value for its sustenance. The value that is placed on something gives it power. Things are valued because of their power. The concepts appear to be intricately interwoven.

Ideology

The ideology of a state is the sum total of its values and vision of the good life [19]. It is the bedrock of state power. These are the values that the citizenry has often internalized. It is a veritable source of cohesion. People who share the same ideology are often bonded by it. People vote into power those who share same ideology as theirs [20]. People who hold political power often are expected to use it to advance a certain ideology. Their perceived success or failure is often measured by their commitment to such ideology. So, ideology gives and sustains political power. Since it is a set of widely shared values, it can easily be converted into political power by garnering the support of those who have sympathy for the ideology in question. That same sympathy for the ideology if well sustained can be used to sustain power.

Meanwhile societies that share similar ideologies share strong affinities. They are less likely to antagonize each other. Conversely, societies that share conflicting ideologies are most likely to antagonize each other [21]. When a country constitutes of societies with different ideologies, conflicts are always rife in such a country. Huntington calls such nations "torn countries" [22]. The importance of ideology in sustenance of political power cannot be overstated.

Values and Voting Patterns

Values play critical roles in elections. People generally vote for those who show commitment to values they cherish. There is a direct connection between votes and values. The candidate that is committed to the values of the majority of the voters often wins. Politicians often lie at campaigns to appear to adhere to values that are dear to voters in order to win their votes. A typical example is Joe Biden supporting fracking before the November 2020 US presidential election only to ban it shortly after being sworn in [23,24]. Voters sometimes want certain values protected. They often vote for the candidate whom they think would protect such values.

Values and National Development

When a nation rolls out development plans, there are always underlying values that it hopes to realize. Development entails choice of priorities. The trajectory of a nation's development will always reflect the values that the government pursues. Development is always about the realization of some values. A warlike state will always prioritize military development. The vision of life a state holds for its citizens generally

informs what the leadership prioritizes in their development plans.

Values and International Diplomacy

The surest way to have peace on the international scene is to share values with neighbors and potential rivals. This is among the main ideas that inspired the formation of the European Union, African Union and the United Nations. Nations are less likely to fight with nations that share same values with them. There are always connections and shared affinities among the citizens of such nations. Deliberate and strategic popularization of a nation's values is an antiwar strategy of choice. Pundits figured out that the more popular a nation's values are with their neighbors, the less likely are the neighbors to attack it, the safer the region. Popularizing a nation's values among the citizens of her rivals is a powerful way of dousing conflicts as citizens are less likely to willingly bear arms against a nation whose values they share.

Modern diplomacy apart from seeking to protect the national interests also seeks to spread the national values. The values are a veritable way of wielding influence. European Union aggressively spreads European values around the world [24]. The United States pushes their culture all over the world and presents their standard normal as the universal normal. In Iran, the US is neutralizing the government hostility by aggressively popularizing her values among Iranian citizens. China in recent years is spending heavily in popularizing their values and culture.

V. CONCLUSION

This work has abundantly shown the interconnections between values and power. The power of a phenomenon confers value on it. The value placed on a phenomenon gives it importance. Political power rests on the established values of a society. Adherence to those values determines the level of legitimacy the government enjoys. When a government threatens the cardinal values of the society, it is likely to lose its power. The people might rise to defend their values by changing the government. Power gives force to values. The values attached power make it even more powerful. The two phenomena are dialectically interwoven.

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