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Finding the best definition and operationalization of power is no easy task in international relations. Scholars in international relations have not been able to agree on the nature of power nor have they been able to find agreement over the role of power (Baldwin 2013, 273). Yet, power is seen as an important concept of international relations that brings it closer to the other branches of political science (Milner 1991, 80–81) where "The doctrine of power is *political doctrine* and the science of power…is *political science* (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950, 82).

While power has been described using a variety of terms – power, influence, control, coercion, force, persuasion, deterrence, compellence, inducement (Baldwin 2013, 273) – , the conception of power conceived of by Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan (1950) and later by Robert Dahl has played a prominent role in understanding the nature and role of power. According to Dahl, power is seen principally as relational: "*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something *B* would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, 202–3). This conception of power as a relation also implies a type of causation. Other theorists, mainly realists, see power as being a resource, what Baldwin describes as the "power-as-resources approach" or power as property (Baldwin 2016, 49–50) where certain kinds of resources are seen as if they were themselves power (Baldwin 2013, 277). Bachrach and Baratz added greater dimension to the concept of power by arguing that it was not enough for *A* to get *B* to do something but that *A* also had the ability to limit *B*'s "…from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolutions be seriously detrimental to *A*'s set of preferences" (1962, 948). *A* is able to, according to Bachrach and Baratz, to wield power not only relationally but also is able to exercise power over social and political values as well as institutional practices in order to insulate *A*'s preferences (1962, 948). Steven Lukes added a third dimension to the power puzzle by arguing that power is not only a reflection of what *A* can get *B* to do but also a reflection of how *A* can influence *B*'s wants "…by influencing, shaping or determining…" them (Lukes 2004, 27). In other words, Lukes argues that conflict is not required for power to be exercised or observed: "…this is to ignore the crucial point that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place" (2004, 27).

At the heart of the discussion of power in political science and more specifically in international relations is the theoretical morass whereby everyone seems to know what power is, when it is present and how it is used/wielded yet no one seems able to come up with an adequate concept of what power is (2013, 279). Robert Art's discussion of military power discusses an operational aspect of power – how power is used militarily – yet no explicit definition of power is made (Art 1980) but reflects the notions of power as property, something to be possessed (Baldwin 2016, 50) and typical of realist analyses of power.

John Mearsheimer conceives of power as the "currency" of international politics defined in strict military terms. As a "currency," power is therefore fungible, referring to the ease whereby power used in one issue area can also be used in other issue areas (Baldwin 2016, 69). Power, therefore, is not based on outcomes or when states decide to exercise their power in relation to other states. Means and ends, Mearsheimer argues, cannot be one and the same since such a conclusion leads to what he terms "a circular argument." Therefore, power is the means by which states achieve their ends. To stress outcomes ignores the importance of such variables as strategy, balance of (military) power, weather, and even disease (Mearsheimer 2014, 12, 55–60).

Not all power is conceived entirely in military terms. Joseph Nye argues that power is not always *hard* but can also be operationalized as *soft power*. Soft power is labeled "soft co-optive power" (Nye 1990, 167). In this form of power, the focus is less on the traditionalist view of power (which, according to Nye, is more akin to Mearsheimer's realist view of power) and more on legitimizing one's power to other states. While the traditionalist view has a strong focus on military power, soft power (or soft co-optive power) relies on resources of cultural attraction, ideology and international

institutions. This shift in less costly exercises of power towards more co-optive forms demonstrates that power is not transferable, coercive and less tangible (1990, 167).

Having outlined the how power is defined and how it is conceived in international relations, one is left to ask how power might best be operationalized. In other words, how does one measure something that cannot be directly measured but can whose existence can be confirmed by other phenomena. While the realist view that power is material is not wrong, the definition of power materially might not be conceptually adequate. As Baldwin notes, "power is a relational concept" and as such "It is impossible to describe actor *A*'s power or potential power without implying something about actor *B*" (Baldwin 2016, 49–50). Therefore, power is multidimensional, not monolithic (2016, 50) and should be operationalized along these dimensions. Baldwin argues that these dimensions are scope, domain, weight, base, means, costs, time and place ("where"). Scope refers to an issue area whereas domain is geographic (2016, 50–51). Weight refers to the probability that one actor can influence another, and base refers to those resources upon which power is based (for example: economic power might be based on one's control of financial markets, trade, etc.) (2016, 52–54). Means are the tools or technique, which, in international relations related to concepts of property, such as weapons, levers, and attempts at influence (2016, 55). Costs refer not only to the actor wielding power but also on the one affected by it and looks at whether power can be exercised "cheaply" (2016, 55–56). Time and place also play pivotal roles. Time can affect the value of power resources (for example: a musket used in 1750 against Native Americans would not have the same "value" used in a modern conflict against a modern tank in 2016). Where refers to the location, and Baldwin notes that "home-court advantages" play an important role in how power resources are valued ((2016, 56).

Because power is difficult *to see* in a non-material way, it stands to reason that power is best operationalized in international relations by "…generalizing measures to more countries for more years" as David Lake proposes in his study on hierarchy in international relations (Lake 2011, 48). This approach relies on observable behaviors that are relational to one another: "focusing on behaviors associated with authority [a form of power] is not intended to slight parallel institutional or formal-legal forms where they exist, but only to emphasize measures that are closer to the relational construct developed here" (2011, 51). In other words, empirical measurements should be constructed that measure behaviors of both actor *A* (the wielder of power) and actor *B* (the actor against which power is being wielded) are observable and measurable. Measuring power should be done in ways that reflect the effects of power and the reality of those effects. To quantify power solely in a material way does not properly capture the contextual relationship between actors. Lake's analysis of hierarchy in international relations operationalizes hierarchy (and power) using many of the dimensions of power identified by Baldwin, such as scope, domain, time and place.

Schelling's concept of power – while not explicitly defined – equates power with the level and type of violence wielded by one actor against another. The act of violence, Schelling notes, "…can be used or threatened to coerce and to deter, to intimidate and to blackmail, to demoralize and to paralyze, in a conscious process of dirty bargaining" and do not necessary have to be labeled wanton or meaningless but can also be wielded purposefully (Schelling 1966, 8). Threats of violence and actual violence can make one actor do something he/she might not normally do, a form of power along the lines of Lake's concepts of authority and coercion used to study and measure hierarchy.

The operationalization of power undoubtedly requires creativity in order to equate observable and measureable behaviors from relations between actors. Power need not be a zero-sum game whereby states in the international system all fight for more of the proverbial "pie" in order to get the biggest slice possible at the expense of other states. Different scopes and domains lead not only to different issue areas and dimensions of power but perhaps to additional "pies" that can be empirically investigated. How experts in international relations define and operationalize power is unimportant in so long as such definitions and operationalizations allow for robust empirical investigations.

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