

# POWER ANALYSIS AND WORLD POLITICS: New Trends versus Old Tendencies

By DAVID A. BALDWIN\*

FROM Niccolò Machiavelli and David Hume to E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, power has been an important (some would say too important) variable in international political theorizing. Although some may regard power analysis as old-fashioned and outdated, recent refinements in social science thinking about power suggest the possibility of revitalizing this approach to understanding international relations.

Exact turning points in intellectual history are difficult to identify, but many would regard the publication of *Power and Society* by Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan as the watershed between the older, intuitive and ambiguous treatments of power and the clarity and precision of more recent discussions.<sup>1</sup> Since then, Herbert Simon, James March, Robert Dahl, Jack Nagel, and others have developed the idea of power as a type of causation.<sup>2</sup> This causal conception of power, according to Nagel, has proved attractive for three reasons: First, there are compelling similarities between intuitive notions of power and

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the British International Studies Association, University of Durham, December 15-17, 1977. The author would like to express his appreciation for the helpful comments provided by Conference participants and by Jeffrey Hart, Robert O. Keohane, and James P. Sewell.

<sup>1</sup> Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1950). In an early and influential article, Herbert A. Simon described his discussion as "a series of footnotes on the analysis of influence and power by Lasswell and Kaplan." "Notes on the Observation and Measurement of Political Power," *Journal of Politics*, xv (November 1953), 501. See also Jack H. Nagel, "Some Questions About the Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science*, xiii (March 1968), 129.

<sup>2</sup> Simon (fn. 1), and *Models of Man* (New York: Wiley 1957); James G. March, "An Introduction to the Theory and Measurement of Influence," *American Political Science Review*, xlix (June 1955), 431-51; Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science*, ii (July 1957), 201-15, and "Power," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, XII (New York: Free Press 1968), 405-15; Jack H. Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1975); and Felix E. Oppenheim, "Power and Causation," in Brian Barry, ed., *Power and Political Theory: Some European Perspectives* (London: John Wiley 1976), 103-16.

Excellent reviews of the literature on power, reflecting both consensus and healthy intellectual dispute, are the following: Dorwin Cartwright, "Influence, Leadership, Control," in James March, ed., *Handbook of Organizations* (Chicago: Rand McNally 1965), 1-47; Dahl, "Power"; James T. Tedeschi and Thomas V. Bonoma, "Power and Influence: An Introduction," in Tedeschi, ed., *The Social Influence Processes* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton 1972), 1-49; and Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power*.

causation. Second, causal conceptions of power are less likely to lead to tautologies. And third, "treatment of power as causation enables power researchers to employ methods developed for more general applications."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the ancient origins of the study of power, Dahl maintains that "the systematic empirical study of power relations is remarkably new."<sup>4</sup> He attributes the "vast improvement in the clarity" of power concepts to the fact that "the last several decades probably have witnessed more systematic efforts to tie down these concepts than have the previous millennia of political thought."<sup>5</sup> Even those who would dispute such assertions could agree that international political theorists might find it useful to rethink their views of power in terms of the recent literature on that subject.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this article is to review some recent scholarship in international relations with special reference to the literature on social power.<sup>7</sup> Topics for discussion include potential power, interdependence, military power, positive sanctions, the zero-sum concept of power, and the distinction between compellence and deterrence.

Before the discussion begins, however, one *caveat* is in order. The increased precision in recent concepts of power has threatened to overwhelm the analyst. Even those most familiar with this literature have complained of interminable theoretical distinctions that make a broad overview difficult to achieve.<sup>8</sup> For purposes of this discussion, therefore, the term "power" will be used in a broad generic sense that is interchangeable with such terms as "influence" and "control." This usage is not intended to deny the validity or the utility of distinguishing among such terms for other purposes; it is intended to imply the relevance of the following discussion for all situations in which A gets B to do

<sup>3</sup> Nagel (fn. 2), 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Dahl, "Power" (fn. 2), 414.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (3rd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1976), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Two important recent works in international relations use Hans Morgenthau's textbook published in 1948 as their basic reference on power: Charles P. Kindleberger, *Power and Money* (New York: Basic Books 1970), and Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation* (New York: Basic Books 1975).

<sup>7</sup> For a review of a different set of international relations works with regard to a different set of topics, see Baldwin, "Inter-Nation Influence Revisited," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, xv (December 1971), 471-86. For a suggestion that current "academic practitioners of international relations analysis and theory" have neglected the study of power, see Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era* (New York: Crane, Russak 1977), 1-5. Gray's contention that power analysis is the only approach that "enables students to appreciate the essence of the field" of international relations, however, goes considerably beyond the argument I am presenting here.

<sup>8</sup> Cartwright (fn. 2), 4; and Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (2d ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1970), 16.

something he would not otherwise do, regardless of how such situations are labeled.<sup>9</sup> The primary focus will be on basic distinctions *essential* to thinking about power rather than on distinctions that are useful in some contexts but irrelevant in others. In discussing power as a type of causation, it is *essential* to specify or at least imply who is influencing whom with respect to what; in short, both scope and domain must be specified or implied.<sup>10</sup> Such distinctions may seem obvious and trivial at first, but I will argue that insistence on them would orient discussions of international power less toward general theories of power and more toward contextual analysis.

### POWER: POTENTIAL, PROBABLE, AND ACTUAL

The frequent failure of power predictions has been noted so often by scholars, journalists, statesmen, and the "man in the street" that it deserves a label—something like "the paradox of unrealized power." How is it that "weak powers" influence the "strong"? How is it that the "greatest power in the world" could suffer defeat at the hands of a "band of night-riders in black pajamas"?<sup>11</sup> How do we explain the "cruel and ridiculous paradox" of the "big influence of small allies"? How can the Arabs get away with defying the United States? How can tiny Israel exercise so much influence on U.S. foreign policy? I shall consider two alternative explanations of this so-called paradox.

First, failure to translate alleged "potential power" (or power "resources") into actual power may be explained in terms of malfunctioning conversion processes. The would-be wielder of power is described as lacking in skill and/or the "will" to use his power resources effectively: "The Arabs had the tanks but didn't know how to use them."

<sup>9</sup> For useful arguments in favor of the validity and desirability of distinguishing power from influence, see David V. J. Bell, *Power, Influence, and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press 1975); and Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations* (New York: Basic Books 1975).

<sup>10</sup> On the importance of this point, see Lasswell and Kaplan (fn. 1), 76; Dahl, "Power" (fn. 2), 408; Dahl (fn. 5), 33; and Nagel (fn. 2), 14, 115. Among students of international politics, the strongest proponents of this view have been Harold and Margaret Sprout. See their *Man-Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics*, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph (Princeton 1956), 39-49; "Environmental Factors in the Study of International Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1 (December 1957), 309-28; *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs: With Special Reference to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1965), 83-98, 214-16; and *Toward a Politics of the Planet Earth* (New York: Van Nostrand 1971), 163-78.

<sup>11</sup> "I still believe he [President Johnson] found it viscerally inconceivable that what Walt Rostow kept telling him was 'the greatest power in the world' could not dispose of a collection of night-riders in black pajamas." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Quagmire Papers," *New York Review of Books* (December 16, 1971), 41.

“The Americans had the bombs but lacked the will to use them.” “The large states controlled the money but lacked organizational unity.” And so forth.<sup>12</sup> Bad luck, incompetence, and pusillanimity are the most common elements in such explanations. “He had the cards but played them poorly” is the theme.

A second explanation for the failure of power predictions focuses on variations in the scope, weight, and domain of power. As Harold and Margaret Sprout have reminded us many times, the capabilities (or potential power) of an actor must be set in the context of a “policy-contingency framework” specifying who is trying (or might try) to get whom to do what.<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, the failure of power predictions is likely to be attributed to faulty predictive techniques rather than to the actors themselves. The so-called “paradox of unrealized power” results from the mistaken belief that power resources useful in one policy-contingency framework will be equally useful in a different one. So-called “weak powers” influence so-called “strong powers” because of the power analyst’s failure to account for the possibility that a country may be weak in one situation but strong in another. Planes loaded with nuclear weapons may strengthen a state’s ability to deter nuclear attacks but may be irrelevant to rescuing the *Pueblo* on short notice. The ability to get other countries to refrain from attacking one’s homeland is not the same as the ability to “win the hearts and minds of the people” in a faraway land. The theme of such explanations is not “he had the cards but played them poorly,” but rather “he had a great bridge hand but happened to be playing poker.”

In order to evaluate these alternative explanations of the “paradox of unrealized power,” a closer examination of the concept of “power resources” is in order. What distinguishes power resources from other things? How fungible are power resources? What is the range of variation in the value of power resources? And what working assumptions about power resources are most suitable for international political analysis?

<sup>12</sup> For examples of this type of explanation, see Knorr (fn. 9), 9-14; 17-18; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown 1977), 11, 18-19, 53, 225; Dahl (fn. 5), 37; and Ray S. Cline, *World Power Assessment: A Calculus of Strategic Drift* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press 1975). The inclusion of Dahl in this list is somewhat anomalous since Dahl stresses variations in the scope and domain of power.

<sup>13</sup> Sprout and Sprout (fn. 10). Actually the Sprouts’ concept of a “policy-contingency framework” goes beyond specification of scope and domain to include the time, place, and means of an influence attempt. For purposes of this article, however, the Sprouts’ insistence that “policy-contingency frameworks” be specified will be treated as roughly equivalent to Dahl’s insistence that scope and domain be specified.

How are we to recognize power resources when we see them? Implicitly or explicitly, almost everyone conceives of such resources as the "means by which one person [actor] can influence the behavior of other persons [actors]." <sup>14</sup> One problem is that it is difficult to imagine what is excluded, since almost anything could be used to influence someone to do something in some situation or another. Another problem is that the means by which one actor can influence the behavior of another depends on who is trying to get whom to do what. A pleasant smile may suffice as a means to get the boss's attention, but a threat to quit may be required to get a raise. Diplomatic pressure may suffice to gain support on a relatively unimportant vote in the U.N. General Assembly, but force may be necessary to get a country to relinquish land claims. What functions as a power resource in one policy-contingency framework may be irrelevant in another. The only way to determine whether something is a power resource or not is to place it in the context of a real or hypothetical policy-contingency framework. <sup>15</sup> Prior to the 19th century, neither oil nor uranium were power resources, since no one had any use for them. Only within the policy-contingency framework of the last hundred years or so have they become resources.

Although it might seem that the predictive value of power resource inventories is impaired by insistence on prior specification of scope and domain (or policy-contingency framework), the opposite is true. The accuracy of our estimate of whether an architect has "adequate" raw materials to complete his project is likely to improve if we first ascertain whether he plans to build a birdhouse or a cathedral.

If there were some generalized means of exercising political power—just as money is a generalized means of exercising purchasing power—the problem of conceiving and measuring political power would be much simpler. <sup>16</sup> Political power resources, however, tend to be much less liquid than economic resources. The owner of an economic resource, such as a petroleum field, has little trouble converting it into another economic resource, such as a factory; but the owner of a political power resource, such as the means to deter atomic attack, is likely to have difficulty converting this resource into another resource

<sup>14</sup> Dahl (fn. 5), 37.

<sup>15</sup> "It seems that what we call a 'resource' is such, not on its own account, but solely because of the uses to which it can be put, and its quantitative aspect, how much resource there is, is still more evidently determinable only in terms of the use." Frank H. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit* (New York: Harper & Row 1921), 65-66.

<sup>16</sup> For a comparison of political power and purchasing power which emphasizes the absence of a political counterpart to money, see Baldwin, "Money and Power," *Journal of Politics*, xxxiii (August 1971), 578-614.

that would, for instance, allow his country to become the leader of the Third World. Whereas money facilitates the exchange of one economic resource for another, there is no standardized measure of value that serves as a medium of exchange for political power resources.

That is not to say that some political power resources are not more fungible than others. One could rank-order power resources according to fungibility; that is, those most likely to be effective in most situations with regard to most people over the most scopes would rank high. Although agreement on the rank-ordering would be far from complete, one would expect money, time, information, and a reputation for making credible threats or promises to rank generally high; while two-headed goats, smog, hula hoops, and asses' jawbones would rank generally low. Despite such variation in the fungibility of political power resources, it is important to recognize that *no political power resource begins to approach the degree of fungibility of money*.<sup>17</sup> As a group, political power resources are relatively low in fungibility; that is precisely why specification of scope and domain is so essential in analyzing political power.

If the range of variation in the effectiveness of power resources were relatively narrow, explaining the failure of power predictions in terms of A's inability or unwillingness to convert his resources into actual power would be less objectionable. As it is, however, even a *caveat* to the effect that power resources in one issue-area may lose some of their effectiveness when applied to another does not suffice. Power resources (or assets) in one policy-contingency framework may not only lose their effectiveness in another context; they may actually become liabilities rather than assets. Threatening voters with nuclear attack is not merely one of the less effective ways to win a mayoral election in New Haven; it is a guarantee of defeat. Possession of nuclear weapons is not just irrelevant to securing the election of a U.S. citizen as U.N. Secretary-General; it is a hindrance. "First-strike weapons" may not only decline in effectiveness in deterrent situations; they may actually impair one's ability to deter.<sup>18</sup>

The source of this problem is the failure to insist that scope and

<sup>17</sup> See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and Robert O. Keohane, "Transnational Relations and World Politics," *International Organization*, xxv (Summer 1971), 736; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "World Politics and the International Economic System," in C. Fred Bergsten, ed., *The Future of the International Economic Order: An Agenda for Research* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books 1973), 121; Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 146. For an extended critique of the analogy between power and money, see Baldwin, "Money and Power" (fn. 16).

<sup>18</sup> See Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1960), 205-54.

domain be specified with regard to power resources as well as to power relationships. Money, tanks, bombs, information, and allies are often called "power resources"; but one can easily imagine plausible policy-contingency frameworks within which each of these becomes a liability rather than an asset. To insist that the scope and domain of power resources be specified would probably inhibit (but not prevent) the development of general theories of international power relationships and promote the development of contextual analyses of power. Such contextual power analysis is precisely what Lasswell and Kaplan were calling for:

Failure to recognize that power may rest on various bases, each with a varying scope, has confused and distorted the conception of power itself, and retarded inquiry into the conditions and consequences of its exercise in various ways. . . .

In particular, it is of crucial importance to recognize that power may rest on various bases, differing not only from culture to culture, but also within a culture from one power structure to another. . . .

What is common to all power and influence relations is only effect on policy. What is affected and on what basis are variables whose specific content in a given situation can be determined only by inquiry into the actual practices of the actors in that situation. . . .

Political analysis must be contextual, and take account of the power practices actually manifested in the concrete political situation.<sup>19</sup>

Although a contextual approach to power analysis would undoubtedly reduce the parsimony of theorizing about power, this disadvantage is less serious than it seems. Specification of scope and domain need not imply atheoretical empiricism. Policy-contingency frameworks can be defined more or less specifically to suit the purpose of the analyst. As the Sprouts put it:

Estimates of capabilities covering all members of the society of nations in all imaginable contingencies would run to millions of combinations and permutations. No government, even more emphatically no university or private individual, could conceivably carry out so massive a research and analysis. Nor is any such undertaking contemplated or needed by anyone. A great many contingencies—for example, Canadian-U.S. military confrontation—are too remote to justify any consideration. By a process of elimination, one comes eventually to a hard core of contingencies that seem more or less likely to set the major patterns of international politics in the years to come, and with regard to which the relative capabilities of interacting nations are not self-evident.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Lasswell and Kaplan (fn. 1), 85, 92, 94.

<sup>20</sup> Sprout and Sprout, *Toward a Politics of the Planet Earth* (fn. 10), 178. Dahl makes a similar point regarding the possibility of comparing policy-contingency frame-

Emphasis on policy-contingency frameworks could improve theorizing about international politics by encouraging the development of "middle-level" theories and by forcing the acknowledgment of assumptions that are often left implicit; e.g., the assumption of war-winning capacity that is implicit in much balance-of-power theorizing.<sup>21</sup>

The question of whether to emphasize the fungibility or lack of fungibility of power resources is not a black-and-white issue. The fruitful way to pose the question is: "What working assumption about the fungibility of power resources is most useful for international political analysis during the next decade?" How one answers this question will depend partly on the extent to which one believes power resources to be fungible, and partly on the particular distortions in current thinking about international power relationships that one regards as most in need of correction. The demonstrations by Schelling<sup>22</sup> that even slight changes in the context of an influence attempt can convert a power asset into a power liability, the recent painful demonstration that the "most powerful state the world has ever known" could not achieve its goals in Southeast Asia, and the effect of the 1973 Arab oil embargo on U.S. foreign policy suggest that political power resources are much less fungible than has often been implied. Among students of international politics there is a tendency to exaggerate the fungibility of power resources, often to the point of ignoring scope and domain; but there is hardly any example of international power analysis that exaggerates the importance of contextual variables, i.e., the policy-contingency framework. In the absence of contrary evidence, I would

---

works: "Power comparability will have to be interpreted in the light of the specific requirements of research and theory, in the same way that the decision as to whether to regard any two objects—animals, plants, atoms, or whatnot—as comparable depends upon general considerations of classification and theoretical import. To this extent, and to this extent only, the decision is 'arbitrary'; but it is not more 'arbitrary' than other decisions that establish the criteria for a class of objects." "The Concept of Power" (fn. 2), 209. Nagel also notes that "domain and scope need not be particularistic or unique. Depending on one's purpose and the limits imposed by reality, the outcome class may contain a few similar members or many diverse elements." (Fn. 2), 14.

<sup>21</sup> Two excellent yet quite different examples of power theorizing based on explicit recognition that power configurations vary from one policy-contingency framework to another are Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), and Hayward Alker, "On Political Capabilities in a Schedule Sense: Measuring Power, Integration, and Development," in Hayward Alker, Karl W. Deutsch, and Antoine Stoetzel, eds., *Mathematical Approaches to Politics* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1973), 307-73. The former work illustrates the value of "middle-level" empirical theorizing about power; the latter work demonstrates that abstract model-building is not precluded by the assumption that power is multi-dimensional.

<sup>22</sup> Schelling (fn. 18).



propose that the international political analyst start with the assumption that power resources are situationally specific. As evidence of fungibility is discovered, appropriate modifications in this working assumption can be made.

Although Keohane and Nye are clearly skeptical about the fungibility of power resources, they appear unwilling to place the burden of proof on those who maintain that power resources are highly fungible. They note that "one of our most important analytical tasks is . . . to understand the exceptions and limitations to basic structural hypotheses that rest on assumptions about the fungibility of power."<sup>23</sup> Whereas they place the burden of proof on those who purport to find exceptions to assumptions of *highly* fungible power, the approach advocated here would place the burden of proof on those who purport to find evidence of exceptions to assumptions that power resources tend to be *low* in fungibility. Whereas the Sprouts and Dahl<sup>24</sup> reject as practically meaningless any statement about influence that does not clearly indicate scope, Keohane and Nye confine themselves to the suggestion that "we may need to reevaluate the usefulness of the homogeneous conception of power."<sup>25</sup>

The "paradox of unrealized power," then, can be explained either in terms of inadequate conversion processes or in terms of mistaken judgments regarding the fungibility of power resources. The latter explanation is preferable for two reasons. First, the emphasis on A's inability and/or unwillingness to convert his alleged power resources into actual power encourages sloppy power analysis. No matter how inept the power analyst has been at estimating A's power resources, the failure of A to influence B can always be attributed to A's lack of commitment, or incompetent execution of the influence attempt. To take it to an absurd but illuminating extreme, one can imagine a power analyst saying, "I just don't understand how a country with so many two-headed goats, so much smog, and so many asses' jawbones could have lost World War III. It must have been due to a lack of skill or commitment on the part of the leaders." To take it to an equally illuminating, more painful, but less absurd point, one frequently hears the following: "I just don't understand how a country with so many nuclear weapons and so many soldiers could have failed to accomplish

<sup>23</sup> Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 146-47.

<sup>24</sup> Dahl, "Power" (fn. 2), 408; Sprout and Sprout, "Environmental Factors . . ." (fn. 10), 325.

<sup>25</sup> Keohane and Nye, "World Politics and the International System" (fn. 17), 163.

its goals in Vietnam. It must have been caused by clumsy and spineless national leadership." Emphasis on skill and will in conversion processes makes it all too easy for the power analyst to avoid facing up to his mistakes. In estimating the *capabilities* of states, the probability of successful conversion should be included in the estimate. In estimating *probable* power, the likelihood of sufficient commitment should also be included.

A second reason for rejecting the conversion-process explanation in favor of the relative-infungibility explanation is that the latter is more likely to focus attention on the contextual nature of power. Whereas the former approach draws attention to the skill of the would-be power wielder, the latter treats such skill as just another resource and focuses attention on the actual or postulated policy-contingency framework within which capabilities are being estimated. Thus, the conversion-process analyst is more likely to attribute the failure of A's threatened beating of B to get B to do X to A's clumsy execution of the threat, but the relative-infungibility analyst is more likely to point out that since B is a masochist, A's threat was doomed to fail from the beginning.<sup>26</sup>

Let us examine some recent examples of international power analysis from the perspective of a relative-infungibility analyst.<sup>27</sup> Knorr, in *The Power of Nations*, emphasizes the importance of the distinction between putative and actualized power; he notes that the frequent failure to convert the former into the latter is a source of puzzlement to many. The distinction, according to Knorr, is between power as a "means" and power as an "effect." Power as a "means" is something that nations "have and can accumulate."<sup>28</sup>

At this point, the relative-infungibility analyst is likely to ask two questions: First, why is the distinction not made in terms of potential and actual effects? That would be straightforward and would retain the basic relational quality of the concept of power.<sup>29</sup> The distinction between an actual and a postulated relation between A and B should

<sup>26</sup> The idea that power resources or "power bases" could be identified without reference to the value system of the person or group to be influenced is not found in Lasswell and Kaplan. They make it clear that power relations presuppose B's value system. (Fn. 1), 76-77, 83-84.

<sup>27</sup> Generally speaking, I consider this to be the perspective of all those who emphasize the importance of scope specification, policy-contingency frameworks, and/or contextual analysis, including Lasswell and Kaplan (fn. 1), the Sprouts (fn. 10), and Dahl (fn. 2).

<sup>28</sup> Knorr (fn. 9), 9.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Nagel (fn. 2), 172-73.

be easy enough for most readers to grasp. In describing putative power as a means that can be possessed and accumulated, Knorr risks obscuring the relational nature of power and returning to the earlier concept of power as an undifferentiated quantifiable mass. A similar risk is incurred when Knorr describes putative power as "inherent in the things of value" that A is ready to give.<sup>30</sup> A relational concept of power assumes that actual or potential power is never inherent in properties of A, but rather inheres in the actual or potential relationship between A's properties and B's value system. Knorr views putative power as "capabilities that permit the power wielder to make effective threats."<sup>31</sup> These capabilities may be transformed into actual power through a conversion process in which the crucial variables are B's perceptions, values, and propensities. The problem is that such variables must be considered in determining whether A has putative power in the first place, since the effectiveness or potential effectiveness of a threat depends partially on B's perceptions of it and on B's value system. *Before* one postulates whether he is dealing with a coward or a masochist, one can say nothing whatever about the potential effectiveness of a threat. *Before* one can attribute putative power to A, one must postulate a scenario or set of scenarios which specify whom A might try to influence and in what respects. Consideration of B's perceptions, values, and skills cannot be delayed until it is time to discuss A's ability to convert his putative power into actual power. If B's perceptions, values, and skills are such as to make it impossible for A to influence him, then putative power should never have been attributed to A in the first place.

A second question that might be asked is whether Knorr makes it sufficiently clear that there are no generalized means of exercising political power. The means that work in one policy-contingency framework may be counterproductive or irrelevant in another. Although Knorr notes that actualized power differs in weight, scope, and domain,<sup>32</sup> he fails to apply these distinctions to putative power. There is no reason to believe, however, that statements about potential power are less subject to the requirement to specify scope and domain than are statements about actual power relationships.

Cline's *World Power Assessment* represents the polar opposite of the type of contextual analysis advocated by the Sprouts and Lasswell and

<sup>30</sup> Knorr (fn. 9), 313.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Kaplan. Cline's basic conceptual framework is a formula for measuring national power:

$$Pp = (C + E + M) \times (S + W)$$

where:

$Pp$  = perceived power

$C$  = critical mass = population + territory

$E$  = economic capability

$M$  = military capability

$S$  = strategic purpose

$W$  = will to pursue national strategy.<sup>33</sup>

This formula is applied to forty nations, each receiving a number representing "total weighted units of perceived power."<sup>34</sup> The United States is assigned 35 such units; the Soviet Union gets 67.5.

For the most part, Cline's analysis ignores questions of scope and domain. Although he defines power as the ability of one government to cause another government to do something it would not otherwise do, there is little or no indication that power resources useful in causing one government to do X may be useless or counterproductive in causing another government to do Y.<sup>35</sup>

Whereas the Sprouts insist that strategies (actual or postulated) be treated as *givens* in capability analysis, Cline treats strategy as a variable to be discussed *after* weights have already been assigned to the other variables. Whereas Cline assigns power weights to territory and population, the Sprouts maintain that "such data acquire political relevance only when viewed in some frame of assumptions as to what is to be attempted, by whom, when and where, vis-à-vis what adversaries, allies, and unaligned onlookers."<sup>36</sup>

In allocating weights for national strategy, Cline assigns high values to countries with "clearcut strategic plans for international aggrandizement" and low values to those without such plans. American strategy is given 0.3, while Russian strategy receives 0.8. Toward the end of

<sup>33</sup> Cline (fn. 12), 11. Cline's book is especially interesting as an indication of how power analysis is performed by high-level government officials. He has served as Deputy Director for Intelligence in the CIA and as Director of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>35</sup> Cline describes power as "a subjective factor" (*ibid.*, 8) and uses the term "perceived power" in his formula. In a puzzling footnote, however, he indicates that "real power" is something different from "perceived power" (p. 12n). The distinction is not developed, thus leaving one wondering about the significance of the formula.

<sup>36</sup> Sprout and Sprout, *Toward a Politics of the Planet Earth* (fn. 10), 177.

the book, Cline describes his preferred strategy for the United States and admits that this strategy has been "implicit in the situation described in preceding pages of this book."<sup>37</sup> A relative-infungibility analyst might point out that it would have been helpful if Cline had made such policy assumptions explicit earlier in the book.

Despite the fact that one can eventually ferret out the vague and implicit policy-contingency framework underlying Cline's *World Power Assessment*, the wisdom of treating power at such an abstract general level may be questioned. If one wanted to promote the idea of power as monolithic, homogeneous, unidimensional and highly fungible, it would be difficult to improve on Cline's approach.

In *Power and Money*, Kindleberger differentiates between "strength" and "power" along lines similar to the distinction between potential and actual power. He treats strength as a means which "exists independently of whether it is used to assert or achieve control over policies of other countries" and power as strength capable of being used effectively.<sup>38</sup> This definition of power, he claims, "does not imply a purpose." But power divorced from purpose begins to sound like generalized or highly fungible power. In context, however, it is clear that Kindleberger intends the statement to differentiate probable from potential power in the sense that a state may have the potential power to influence the policies of another state, but may have neither the intention nor the desire to actually exercise such power. The weakness in Kindleberger's concept of power is that he implies that power can be divorced completely from goals or purposes. Although it is true that potential power does not imply actual purposes, it does imply at least a hypothetical purpose in the sense of a postulated policy-contingency framework.

In considering the "paradox of unrealized power," it has been argued that the most useful way to resolve the paradox is by tying power analysis more closely to specific contexts. I have suggested that one of the most crucial weaknesses in current thinking about international power relationships is the failure to specify scope and domain, and the consequent tendency to exaggerate the fungibility of power resources. In order to demonstrate the usefulness of contextual power analysis, I shall conclude with an examination of the problem of "worst-case" analysis from the perspective of the above discussion.

<sup>37</sup> Cline (fn. 12), 134-35.

<sup>38</sup> Kindleberger (fn. 6), 56. He defines power in terms of ability to use strength "efficiently" at one point (p. 56) and in terms of ability to use strength "effectively" at another point (p. 65). In the context of power analysis the difference is not trivial.

In worst-case analysis, the assumption is that preparing for the worst is wise and prudent policy. This assumption, often espoused by military thinkers, is usually associated with the idea that policymakers should concentrate on assessing the *capability* of other actors more than (or rather than) on the *intentions* of other actors. "Why not prepare for the worst?" is a superficially appealing slogan that must be refuted each year when military appropriations are being considered. Recognition of the multidimensional nature of power and the low fungibility of power resources is vital in showing why worst-case analysis is not a wise and prudent basis for policy. The reason may be demonstrated by comparing political power with purchasing power.

Storing up purchasing power in order to be able to deal with unforeseen financial catastrophies is an ancient, honorable, and prudent undertaking. The existence of a common denominator of economic value that also serves as a medium of exchange (i.e., money) enables us to treat economic resources *as if* they were unidimensional, thereby allowing us to prepare *simultaneously* for small, medium, and large financial difficulties. The fact that I am indebted to druggists, farmers, the government, bankers, and insurance companies for a wide variety of goods and services hardly matters, since I can use the same purchasing power resource—money—to pay them all. This is why we say that money is highly fungible. In dealing with problems of purchasing power, more money is almost always better than less. Aside from tax problems, it is difficult (but not impossible) to imagine a situation in which too much money prevents one from exercising one's purchasing power.

Political power is quite different from purchasing power. There is no common denominator of political value corresponding to money in terms of which political debts can be discharged. The lack of fungibility of political power resources means that preparing to deal with the worst contingencies may hinder one's ability to deal with less severe ones. ("The worst may be the enemy of the bad!") Thus, preparing for a nuclear first strike may weaken a country's deterrent capability; preparing for nuclear war may weaken a country's ability to get one of its citizens elected Secretary General of the U.N.; preparing for a seven-year famine may weaken a nation's ability to resist the demands of poor countries for food aid; preparing for military domination of the world may make it hard to win the hearts and minds of the people; and preparing for autarky may hurt a country's bargaining ability in international trade negotiations. Because political power is multidimensional,

mensional and political power resources are low in fungibility, more power in one policy-contingency framework may mean less in another. Although in terms of purchasing power, more is almost always better than less, the same cannot be said of any particular kind of political power. Since not all contingencies are equally probable, policy makers who prepare for the worst and ignore the intentions of other nations may wind up preparing for a very costly but unlikely contingency at the expense of preparing for a less devastating but more likely contingency. Such policy makers are neither wise nor prudent.

### POWER AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Everyone seems to agree that "interdependence" is important; but not everyone agrees on how it should be defined, or on whether it is increasing or decreasing.<sup>39</sup> Although many would agree that interdependence refers to a situation in which states are "significantly" affected by their interaction, there is less agreement as to how to differentiate "significant" effects from "insignificant" ones. Three possibilities may be considered. First, interaction can be equated with interdependence. It is sometimes suggested that this denotes mere interconnectedness rather than interdependence.<sup>40</sup> Second, interdependence can be defined in terms of interactions (or transactions) that have reciprocal costly effects.<sup>41</sup> The difficulty with this definition is that many forms of international interaction, such as trade, involve reciprocal costly effects but not mutual dependency. Such a conception does not seem to capture the notion of dependence underlying the use of that term in common parlance. Buying what is easy to buy elsewhere (e.g., sand) or buying what is easy to do without (e.g., caviar) are not usually considered to create dependency, although both kinds of transactions involve costs for each trading partner.<sup>42</sup> In conceiving of dependence or interdepend-

<sup>39</sup> See Oran R. Young, "Interdependencies in World Politics," *International Journal*, xxiv (Autumn 1969), 726-50; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, "Interdependence: Myth or Reality?" *World Politics*, xxvi (October 1973), 1-27; Kenneth Waltz, "The Myth of Interdependence," in Charles Kindleberger, ed., *The International Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press 1970), 205-23; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "International Interdependence and Integration," in Nelson W. Polsby and Fred I. Greenstein, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, VIII, *International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley 1975), 363-414.

<sup>40</sup> Alex Inkeles, "The Emerging Social Structure of the World," *World Politics*, xxvii (July 1975), 467-95, esp. 477-86.

<sup>41</sup> This definition seems to be the basic concept of interdependence espoused by Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 8-9. There is some ambiguity about this point, however, since their concept of "vulnerability interdependence" corresponds more closely with the idea of interdependence as transactions that are mutually costly to forego.

<sup>42</sup> The pioneering work by Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California 1945) is still the best statement

ence, the relevant costs are not those involved in *carrying out* the transaction, but rather those involved in *foregoing* it. Not everyone who drinks is an alcoholic; not everyone who smokes is an addict; and not every international trading relationship involves dependency. The true measure of our dependency on imported oil is not what we have to give up in order to get it, but rather what we would have to give up in order to go without it. The smoker who can quit whenever he wants to is not an addict; the drinker who can take it or leave it is not an alcoholic; and the country that can easily forego imported oil is not dependent on it. This basic insight of the Stoics deserves reiteration in the context of discussions of interdependence.

A third way to conceive of interdependence, then, is in terms of relationships that are costly for each party to forego.<sup>43</sup> This conception of interdependence has three advantages over most others. First, it captures the intuitive notion of dependency underlying most common parlance. Second, it is consistent with the theoretical treatments of dependency by Thibaut and Kelley, Emerson, and Blau.<sup>44</sup> Although these works are well known in the literature on social power, they are rarely cited in discussions of international interdependence.<sup>45</sup> Cross-fertilization between the social power literature and the international relations literature is more likely if our fundamental concepts of de-

of the relationship between trade and dependency. "The influence which country A acquires in country B by foreign trade depends in the first place upon the total gain which B derives from that trade; the total gain from trade for any country is indeed nothing but another expression for the total impoverishment which would be inflicted upon it by a stoppage of trade. In this sense, the classical concept, gain from trade, and the power concept, dependence on trade, now being studied are seen to be merely two aspects of the same phenomenon" (p. 18). See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, trans. Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press 1964), 36n, and *On the Social Contract*, trans. Judith R. Masters; ed. Roger D. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press 1978), 74n.

<sup>43</sup> See Waltz (fn. 39); also Inkeles (fn. 40), 483-88; Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics*, xxviii (April 1976), 317-47, at 320. Note that the concept of interdependence as entailing relations that would be mutually costly to break need not imply that such relations are "positive" or "beneficial" for the participants. It merely implies that those involved have a choice, and that in choosing to maintain the relationship they forego some other alternative.

<sup>44</sup> John W. Thibaut and Harold H. Kelley, *The Social Psychology of Groups* (New York: Wiley 1959), 100-125; Richard M. Emerson, "Power-Dependence Relations," *American Sociological Review*, xxvii (February 1962), 31-41; Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley 1964), 118-25, 133, 197. If a graduate student were to ask me where to begin the study of international interdependence, I should direct attention to these writers and to Hirschman (fn. 42) rather than to more recent treatments of this topic in the international relations literature.

<sup>45</sup> The extensive bibliography on interdependence compiled by Keohane and Nye for the *Handbook of Political Science* (fn. 39) contains no entry for any of the authors cited in the preceding footnote—including Hirschman.



pendency are compatible. A third advantage of this conception of interdependence is that it facilitates thinking about the links between dependency and power. In order to study dependency, one must look at opportunity costs of alternative relationships as well as at actual relationships. Likewise, in order to study power, one must look not only at what B does, but at what B would otherwise do.

Interdependence interests international theorists primarily because of its relationship to power. If A and B are mutually dependent on one another, then each could inflict costs on the other by severing the relationship. And the ability to inflict costs on other actors is one measure of influence.<sup>46</sup> Thus, to say that A and B are interdependent implies that they possess the ability to influence one another in some respect. (Note that this approach does not involve the difficulty of describing a gun as a power resource only to discover that one is trying to influence someone who wants to be shot. Both the value systems and the available alternatives for each actor must be considered in determining whether severance of the relationship would entail costs.) In this sense, interdependence *always* implies mutual potential power of some kind. Whether either actor will be able to influence the other to a satisfactory degree, soon enough, with respect to the desired scopes, or at acceptable cost to itself, is quite another matter. As Young has pointed out, a rising level of interdependence increases both the opportunities and the costs of exercising power.<sup>47</sup>

If dependency and power are closely linked concepts, some of the distinctions useful in studying one may be useful in studying the other. Knorr has outlined a number of such distinctions in his discussion of interdependence.<sup>48</sup> Just as power relationships vary in scope, weight, domain, and symmetry, so do relationships of interdependency: contextual analysis may be as appropriate for the study of interdependence as it is for the study of power.

Keohane and Nye suggest that in order to understand the role of power in interdependence, we must distinguish between "sensitivity" and "vulnerability."<sup>49</sup> "Sensitivity interdependence" refers to the liability to incur costly effects within a given policy framework; "vulnerability interdependence" refers to the liability to incur costly effects even after the policy framework has been altered. For example, "sensitivity

<sup>46</sup> Cf. John C. Harsanyi, "Measurement of Social Power, Opportunity Costs, and the Theory of Two-Person Bargaining Games," *Behavioral Science*, vii (January 1962), 67-80; and Nagel (fn. 1).

<sup>47</sup> Young (fn. 39), 746-47.

<sup>48</sup> Knorr (fn. 9), 207-10.

<sup>49</sup> Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 11-12.

interdependence” could be used to refer to the costs of working within the framework of the Bretton Woods monetary regime during the late 1960’s; “vulnerability interdependence” could be used to refer to the costs associated with changing to a different international monetary regime. The distinction between the two types of interdependence indicates that dependence, like power, varies from one policy-contingency framework to another. Sensitivity interdependence and vulnerability interdependence are simply labels applied to particular kinds of policy-contingency frameworks. Although Keohane and Nye use these distinctions imaginatively to generate important observations about world politics, the distinctions themselves represent no new theoretical insights. Lasswell and Kaplan, Dahl, and the Sprouts have previously pointed out that power relationships in one policy-contingency framework are likely to differ from those in another.

Instead of treating the distinction between sensitivity interdependence and vulnerability interdependence as one of many ways to differentiate among policy-contingency frameworks, Keohane and Nye maintain that the distinction is essential to understanding the “role of power in interdependence.”<sup>50</sup> In answer to the question of how this distinction helps us to understand the relationship between interdependence and power, they reply: “Clearly, it indicates that sensitivity interdependence will be less important than vulnerability interdependence in providing power resources to actors.”<sup>51</sup> As an empirical proposition, this answer is debatable; as a logical deduction, it is a *non sequitur*. Consider the example of a marriage. Sensitivity interdependence could be used to refer to the costs associated with working nonviolently within the framework of the marriage, of “making the marriage work.” Vulnerability interdependence could be used to refer to the costs associated with violent divorce. Although the husband might have the advantage in terms of brute force and economic ability to survive a divorce, it is not clear that this power resource would be more important than the power resources provided by sensitivity interdependence. If both husband and wife were strongly committed to nonviolent resolution of conflict within the framework of the marriage, the power resources associated with asymmetrical vulnerability interdependence might be of little or no importance compared to those associated with sensitivity interdependence. Likewise, if nation-states have a strong commitment to making a given international regime work, the power resources associated with sensitivity interdependence may be more im-

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

portant than those associated with vulnerability interdependence.<sup>52</sup> If revolution is "unthinkable," the ability to foment a revolution is not a particularly useful power resource. In the absence of information or assumptions about the degree of commitment to maintaining a given policy framework, one can say *nothing* about the relative importance of the power resources provided by sensitivity interdependence and vulnerability interdependence. Although Keohane and Nye have formulated a useful distinction, they have overestimated its importance for understanding the relation between power and interdependence.

It has recently been suggested that Dahl's concept of power is incapable of dealing with interdependence.<sup>53</sup> Since Dahl is close to the "mainstream" of contemporary thinking about social power, some consideration of this viewpoint is in order. It will be argued that Dahl's concept is capable of dealing with interdependence and that the contrary claim is based on a distorted view of Dahl's position. Hart's argument is based on a distinction among three conceptions of power: (1) as control over resources, (2) as control over actors, and (3) as control over events and outcomes. Dahl's concept of power as the ability of A to get B to do what he would otherwise not do is classified as (2): control over actors.<sup>54</sup> Such a classification seriously distorts Dahl's idea, since his concept of power includes *both* actors and outcomes as necessary components. Dahl's insistence that statements about power that fail to specify scope verge on meaninglessness underscores the fact that his concept of power concerns the ability of one actor to influence another actor *with respect to certain outcomes*. In the literature on social power, Dahl's position is often referred to in terms of control over outcomes and is sometimes even classified as an "outcome definition."<sup>55</sup> As Nagel points out, anyone who employs a causal concept of power, such as Dahl's, must state the outcome caused.<sup>56</sup>

Hart's suggestion that Dahl's concept of power cannot account for the possibility of interdependence among actors is puzzling.<sup>57</sup> In the mutual nuclear deterrence between the Soviet Union and the United

<sup>52</sup> The distinction between "sensitivity" interdependence and "vulnerability" interdependence bears some resemblance to that between limited war and "total" (or not-so-limited) war. The policy constraints are obviously fewer in one situation than in the other. For a demonstration that ability to fight a "total" war may be of little help in fighting a limited war, see Charles Wolf, Jr., "The Logic of Failure: A Vietnam Lesson," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, xvi (September 1972), 397-401.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey Hart, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations," *International Organization*, xxx (Spring 1976), 297, 303.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 291. A similar line of reasoning, drawing on Hart's article, is found in Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Nagel (fn. 2), 9-10, 14, 29, 114-22, 175-76.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Hart (fn. 53), 303.

States, the security of each depends on the other. This is typically regarded as an example of interdependence and can be described in terms of simultaneous attempts by each nation to get the other one to do what it might not otherwise do—i.e., refrain from attack. In the third edition of *Modern Political Analysis*, the system of mutual deterrence is even cited by Dahl as an example of a situation of reciprocal influence.<sup>58</sup> The contention that Dahl's concept of power can neither account for nor deal with interdependence is unconvincing.

### MILITARY POWER

Two of the most important weaknesses in traditional theorizing about international politics have been the tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of military power resources and the tendency to treat military power as the ultimate measuring rod to which other forms of power should be compared. Both tendencies are anathema to the approach advocated by Lasswell and Kaplan. Although these authors give "special consideration to the role of violence," they repeatedly assert that power does not rest "always, or even generally, on violence"; that "power may rest on various bases"; that "none of the forms of power is basic to all the others"; and that "political phenomena are only obscured by the pseudosimplification attained with any unitary conception of power as being always and everywhere the same."<sup>59</sup> Despite the vigorous efforts of Lasswell and Kaplan and the tradition of contextual power analysis they spawned, the contemporary literature on international relations often exhibits the same tendencies to exaggerate the effectiveness of military power bases as did the earlier works.

Cline's *World Power Assessment* notes the existence of various forms of power, but describes war as the "true end game" in international "chess." "A study of power," according to Cline, "in the last analysis, is a study of the capacity to wage war."<sup>60</sup> In a similar vein, Gilpin acknowledges that power may take many forms, "though, in the final analysis, force is the ultimate form of power." Gilpin even makes the more extreme contention that "ultimately, the determination of the distribution of power can be made *only* in retrospect as a consequence of war."<sup>61</sup> Phrases describing force as the "ultimate" form of power imply that all forms of power are arrayed on a single continuum of

<sup>58</sup> Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (fn. 5), 50. See also Nagel (fn. 2), 142-43; Baldwin (fn. 16), 606.

<sup>59</sup> Lasswell and Kaplan (fn. 1), ix, 76, 85, 94, 92.

<sup>60</sup> Cline (fn. 12), 8.

<sup>61</sup> Gilpin (fn. 6), 24; emphasis added.

effectiveness or importance. If power is conceived of as a multidimensional phenomenon, it is harder to think in terms of such a continuum. If one thinks of power as situationally specific rather than generalized, the idea of an "ultimate" form of power does not make much sense. It may well be that there are some very important policy-contingency scenarios in which force is a critically important power resource, but it would be more helpful to identify such situations than to assert that force is the "ultimate" form of power. Most states, after all, resolve most international disputes most of the time without the actual or threatened use of force.

Although Keohane and Nye continually criticize the traditional emphasis on military force, even they sometimes seem to exaggerate the effectiveness of military force as a power resource. While noting the increasing costs associated with military force and the inapplicability of force to many situations, they contend that force "dominates" other means of power.<sup>62</sup>

The proposition that military force is more effective than other power resources is both ambiguous and debatable. In the absence of clearly specified or implied policy-contingency frameworks, the proposition that force is more effective than other power bases has little, if any, meaning. As I argued earlier, all generalizations about power should be set in a context specifying (as a minimum) who is trying to get whom to do what. In some situations, force works very well, but in others it is actually counterproductive. Underlying the analysis of Keohane and Nye there seems to be a set of implicit assumptions as to the number of policy-contingency frameworks in which force is effective, and as to the relative importance of such frameworks. It would be helpful if the authors would spell out such assumptions, including the criteria used in assigning weights to such frameworks.

As an empirical proposition, the idea that force dominates other means of power could be formulated as a hypothesis to be tested, but it does not deserve the status of an assumption. According to Keohane and Nye, "if there are no constraints on one's choice of instruments"—i.e., if cost considerations are ignored—"the state with superior military force will prevail."<sup>63</sup> Despite the fact that *Power and Interdependence* describes several situations in which force would *not* be effective, and

<sup>62</sup> See Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 8, 11-18, 27-29, 228. Although the authors use the term "dominates," the context indicates that they are referring to the relative "effectiveness" of force. Credence is lent to this interpretation by their use of the term "effectiveness" instead of "dominance" in an earlier similar discussion. Cf. Keohane and Nye, "World Politics and the International Economic System" (fn. 17), 125-26.

<sup>63</sup> Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 27; emphasis in original.

despite the easily demonstrable counterproductivity of military power resources in many policy-contingency frameworks, Keohane and Nye imply that military force will prevail if costs can be ignored.

Let us examine three situations referred to in *Power and Interdependence*. First, Keohane and Nye contend that “military power dominates economic power in the sense that economic means alone are likely to be ineffective against the serious use of military force.”<sup>64</sup> Although this is a rather special situation that can hardly serve as the basis for sweeping generalizations about the relative effectiveness of economic and military power, it is not self-evident or manifestly true. Opinions differ, of course, but it is not obvious to me that in 1973 the American threat to use force worked better than the Arab oil embargo. Second, they indicate that “in the worst situations, force is ultimately necessary to guarantee survival.”<sup>65</sup> That may have been a useful assumption for students of international politics prior to the atomic age—although I doubt it—but at a time of rapidly multiplying (military and non-military) threats of planetary disaster, it should be treated as a hypothesis to be scrutinized carefully.<sup>66</sup> In today’s world, the effectiveness of military force in guaranteeing survival may be steadily and rapidly declining. Third, Keohane and Nye state that “military power helps the Soviet Union to dominate Eastern Europe economically as well as politically.”<sup>67</sup> That hypothesis may be plausible, but it also sounds plausible when stated backwards—i.e., “military power *hinders* the Soviet attempt to dominate Eastern Europe, at least in some respects.” *A priori*, I have no reason to believe that the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia bolstered the long-run prospects for communism in Eastern Europe. *A priori*, it seems reasonable to suspect that this invasion may have generated (intensified?) some anti-Russian resentment that will not disappear quickly. Although Nye and Keohane may be right, one wishes that students of international politics would consider the possibility that the Soviet use of force in Eastern Europe was counterproductive in at least some respects.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>66</sup> For a review of some of these threats, see Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, *Multiple Vulnerabilities: The Context of Environmental Repair and Protection*, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph No. 40 (Princeton 1974).

<sup>67</sup> Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 28.

<sup>68</sup> I do not want to push this argument too far. Jacob Viner was fond of quoting William Stanley Jevons as follows: “It is always to be remembered that the failure of an argument in favor of a proposition does not, generally speaking, add much, if any probability, to the contradictory proposition.” For a discussion of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe that identifies several drawbacks to the Soviet use of force, see Chris-

Even within the military sphere, power discussions could be fruitfully considered in a more contextual manner. The idea of "maximizing the military might" of a state does not make much sense unless military power resources are relatively fungible. In a world of widely differing military policy-contingency frameworks—nuclear war, conventional war, limited war, guerrilla war, and so forth—it might be more useful to speak about different kinds of military power.<sup>69</sup> This approach is especially appealing to the extent that military power assets in one policy-contingency framework become liabilities in another. Schelling's demonstration that first-strike weapons can be liabilities in certain kinds of deterrent situations is a case in point.<sup>70</sup>

### POSITIVE SANCTIONS

Positive sanctions (rewards and promised rewards) have long been important as a means by which some states get other states to do things they would not otherwise do. Whether such relationships should be labeled "power," "influence," or "nonpower influence," need not concern us here, since we are using the term "power" in the generic sense that includes all such labels. The important thing is recognition that positive sanctions are significant resources by which international actors affect the behavior, beliefs, attitudes, or policies of other actors. Knorr has rightly pointed out the paucity of academic literature concerning the role of positive sanctions in world politics.<sup>71</sup> In a world in which destructive power seems to grow exponentially, improved understanding of the actual and potential role of positive sanctions is highly desirable.

The increased attention being focused on economic power in world politics reinforces the need for more research on positive sanctions, since economic power often takes such a form.<sup>72</sup> It is interesting—but not encouraging—to note that the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968) includes an index entry for "threat" but none for "promise"; an article on "punishment" but none on "reward"; and an article on "military power potential" but none on "economic power potential." Knorr's recent consideration of military power, economic

---

topher D. Jones, "Soviet Hegemony in Eastern Europe: The Dynamics of Political Autonomy and Military Intervention," *World Politics*, xxix (January 1977), 216-41.

<sup>69</sup> On this point, see Knorr (fn. 9), 46.

<sup>70</sup> Schelling (fn. 18), 207-54.

<sup>71</sup> Knorr (fn. 9), ix, 310-11. See also Baldwin, "The Power of Positive Sanctions," *World Politics*, xxiv (October 1971), 19-38.

<sup>72</sup> See Baldwin, "Economic Power," in James T. Tedeschi, ed., *Perspectives on Social Power* (Chicago: Aldine 1974), 395-413.

power, interdependence, negative sanctions, and positive sanctions in *The Power of Nations*, however, provides some hope that the next *International Encyclopedia* may fill such lacunae.

One of the most difficult conceptual problems in thinking about positive sanctions is the relationship between exchange and power. Despite the fact that ordinary economic exchange relations can be described in terms of Dahl's broad intuitive notion of power, many scholars resist the use of power terminology in analyzing such relations.<sup>73</sup> Knorr acknowledges positive sanctions as important, but his attempt to distinguish such "nonpower influence" from exchange relations adds little to the discussion.<sup>74</sup> On the one hand, "power influence" is described as "harmful" to B because it restricts his choices. On the other hand, "nonpower influence" is described as "beneficial" to B because it enriches his choices. Although it is useful to define positive and negative sanctions in terms of whether B *perceives* them as rewards or punishments, it seems unwise to assume that B always knows what is best for him. It is not necessarily harmful to restrict the choices available to children, drug addicts, or nation-states. Children can be rewarded with too much candy; drug addicts can be rewarded with too much heroin; and countries can be given more foreign aid than is good for them. The question of whether rewards are actually beneficial to the recipient is an important one, but it seems more useful to treat it as an empirical rather than a definitional question.

Within the category of mutually "beneficial" interaction, Knorr distinguishes between "exchange" and "nonpower influence" as follows:

What distinguishes nonpower influence flows from . . . exchanges is that one actor gives something of value to another without condition, without any stipulated payment, now or later. For instance, A may extend economic assistance to B, exclusively in order to enable the latter to accelerate his economic development. A expects to receive nothing in return from B, and B understands this.<sup>75</sup>

Such a distinction seems almost impossible for researchers to apply to relations among nation-states. Stipulations regarding repayment may be unstated and may be only vaguely perceived by the actors involved. The social exchange theorists have demonstrated that exchange can be a subtle process and that feelings of indebtedness on the part of the

<sup>73</sup> On this point, see Baldwin, "Power and Social Exchange," *American Political Science Review* (forthcoming). In the literature on international relations, Hirschman's *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (fn. 42) is of fundamental importance. His treatment demonstrates that power potentially inheres in all international trade relations.

<sup>74</sup> Knorr (fn. 9), 7-8, 310-19.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.



reward recipient may be created *regardless* of the stipulations or intentions of the reward giver.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, even the most altruistic benefactor may change his mind and remind the aid recipient that he owes him a favor. In strictly economic exchanges such attempts to make retroactive stipulations regarding payment are unlikely to succeed, because the original recipient can point out that the terms of the transaction were clearly specified at the time it occurred. But social and political exchange are distinguished from economic exchange partly by the vagueness of the obligations involved.<sup>77</sup> Even the example cited by Knorr could be regarded as a type of social exchange. State A could be viewed as exchanging economic assistance for state B's promise to use the money to accelerate economic development (rather than to buy weapons or swell the Swiss bank accounts of the leaders). People and countries exchange money for promises all the time; so there is nothing particularly unusual about such an interpretation of Knorr's example. As long as A places any strings at all on the use of his aid, he may be viewed as making a stipulation as to payment. After all, if the behavior (attitude, policy, or whatever) stipulated by A had no value to him, he would not make the stipulation in the first place. I have never encountered a real-world example of totally stringless aid, and I never expect to. The United States has dispersed billions of dollars to promote economic development in other countries, but it is clear that American policy makers—rightly or wrongly—believed that faster economic development in those countries would enhance the long-run welfare and security of the United States.<sup>78</sup> In sum, although distinctions between power and exchange can be made, I suspect that students of international relations would find it as profitable to focus on the similarities as on the differences.

The fact that the mutual exchange of rewards is so prevalent in international relations may partly explain why the subject lacks excitement; that, in turn, may partly explain why students of international relations have focused their attention on the rarer but presumably more exciting instances in which countries have exchanged threats and/or punishments. However, the role of positive sanctions in world politics has begun to attract scholarly attention. Roger Fisher, Klaus

<sup>76</sup> See Blau (fn. 44); Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity," *American Sociological Review*, xxv (April 1960), 161-78.

<sup>77</sup> "Social exchange differs in important ways from strictly economic exchange. The basic and most crucial distinction is that social exchange entails *unspecified* obligations." Blau (fn. 44), 93; emphasis in original.

<sup>78</sup> See Baldwin, *Economic Development and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1966).

Knorr, Johan Galtung, Richard Rosecrance, Alexander George, Richard Smoke,<sup>79</sup> and a few others have contributed to this discussion, but much work remains to be done. I suggest that further research on this topic could be built on the earlier work of Hirschman and the social exchange theorists. Eckstein's suggestion that exchange theory has much to offer students of international politics deserves to be taken seriously.<sup>80</sup>

#### POWER AS A ZERO-SUM GAME

Traditionally, scholars of international relations have distinguished between conflict and cooperation. Power, it has often been argued, has to do with conflict but not with cooperation. The implied assumption was that we needed less conflict and more cooperation. Thomas Schelling, in *The Strategy of Conflict*, called into question the usefulness of this dichotomy by showing that most, if not all, interesting international political situations involved mixtures of both conflictual and cooperative elements. Although zero-sum games and games of pure cooperation might be useful ways to define the ends of a continuum, neither was likely to describe a real-world situation. Even war—traditionally regarded as the epitome of intense conflict—was shown by Schelling to involve significant cooperative dimensions. Although Schelling relied primarily on limited war to make his point, his logic can easily be extended to include so-called “total war.” Nuclear war may not be unthinkable, but a war in which the participants would be *indifferent* to the prospects of planetary destruction is difficult to imagine. Even poker—that prototypical example of a zero-sum game—is hardly ever a zero-sum game in real life. Such values as the enjoyment of the game, concern about the player who is in over his head, and worries about whether the other players will be willing to play again in the future, almost always intrude on what is supposed to be a zero-sum game.

Despite Schelling, nuclear weapons, and ever-increasing awareness of the fragility of the earth's ecosystem, one still finds references to international politics as a zero-sum game in some or all respects. Stan-

<sup>79</sup> Roger Fisher, *International Conflict for Beginners* (New York: Harper and Row 1969); Knorr (fn. 9); Johan Galtung, “On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions, With Examples from the Case of Rhodesia,” *World Politics*, xix (April 1967), 378-416; Richard Rosecrance, ed., *The Future of the International Strategic System* (San Francisco: Chandler 1972); Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press 1974).

<sup>80</sup> Harry Eckstein, “Authority Patterns: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 67 (December 1973), 1157-59.

ley Hoffmann, for example, has recently argued that the model of a zero-sum game is "a valid account for considerable portions of world politics."<sup>81</sup> His citation of the Arab-Israeli dispute as a case in point is instructive. Although conflict may be the dominant mode of Arab-Israeli interaction, conceiving of the situation as a zero-sum game virtually assures that cooperative dimensions will be overlooked. Even Hoffmann's *caveat*—that he is using the zero-sum model as an "ideal-type" in order to "reveal the essence of the game"—fails to balance the perspective. In zero-sum games, the absence of cooperative elements is not merely one characteristic among many; it is the essential defining characteristic. A portrayal of the Arab-Israeli dispute as a zero-sum game strengthens neither our understanding of the situation nor the prospects of peace.<sup>82</sup>

Robert Gilpin argues that international politics *always* takes the form of a zero-sum game. After noting that "politics is the realm of power," he states that "the essential fact of politics is that power is always relative; one state's gain in power is by necessity another's loss." "From this *political* perspective," he adds, "the mercantilists are correct in emphasizing that in power terms, international relations is a zero-sum game."<sup>83</sup> Regardless of what one thinks of Gilpin's concept of power, it is important to realize that the Dahl-Lasswell-Kaplan conception of power is not a zero-sum view. Their conception permits us to describe situations in which A's ability to get B to do X increases *simultaneously* with B's ability to get A to do X.<sup>84</sup>

The model of the zero-sum game may be a potentially useful conceptual tool for the student of international politics. However, given traditional propensities to exaggerate the importance of negative sanctions while ignoring positive ones and to concentrate on conflictive dimensions of world politics while neglecting cooperative ones, theorists would do well to leave this particular conceptual tool on the shelf for a few years. Mixed-motive game models almost always provide a more accurate description of real-world situations than do zero-sum models.

<sup>81</sup> Hoffmann, "Notes on the Elusiveness of Modern Power," *International Journal*, xxx (Spring 1975), 191.

<sup>82</sup> It is interesting to note that one could neither predict nor advocate Sadat's dramatic visit to Israel on the basis of zero-sum game assumptions. The players in a zero-sum game have no common interests—by definition. Therefore, they never have a reason to negotiate (unless they think their opponent is stupid and can be outwitted).

<sup>83</sup> Gilpin (fn. 6), 22-25, 34; emphasis in original.

<sup>84</sup> For further discussion of this point, see Baldwin (fn. 16), 605-6.

## COMPELLENCE AND DETERRENCE

The distinction between compellence and deterrence is frequently noted by scholars in international relations—usually with reference to Schelling.<sup>85</sup> No instance of a challenge to the validity or the usefulness of this distinction has come to my attention. I will argue that an implicit assumption about the probability of a successful influence attempt underlies Schelling's discussion of compellence and deterrence, and that this assumption calls into question both the validity and the usefulness of the distinction.<sup>86</sup> There are, according to Schelling, typical differences between threats intended to make an adversary do something and threats intended to keep him from starting something. These differences concern the probability of success, the clarity of the threat, timing, and the difficulty of compliance.<sup>87</sup>

There is a difference between trying to discourage the Russians from launching a nuclear attack and trying to encourage the South Africans to change their form of government, but describing that difference as the difference between keeping someone from doing something and getting someone to do something is not very helpful. From a purely semantic standpoint, any deterrent threat can be stated in compellent terms, and any compellent threat can be stated in deterrent terms. Thus, we could talk about compelling the Russians to do X (when X is anything except launching a nuclear attack) and about deterring South Africans from doing X (when X is continued white dominance). When we describe an influence attempt as deterrence, we usually have

<sup>85</sup> At times such references become rather confusing. Keohane and Nye, for example, usually use the terms "positive" and "negative" power to refer to the compellence/deterrence distinction ("World Politics and the International Economic System" [fn. 17], 119, 134; *Power and Interdependence* [fn. 12], 44). But elsewhere they refer to the ability to resist influence attempts as "the negative dimension of power." ("World Politics and the International Economic System" [fn. 17], 134.) It seems desirable to maintain a clear distinction between deterring influence attempts and resisting them. The difference between deterring a nuclear attack and resisting one is a difference that matters.

<sup>86</sup> Parts of the argument that follows are drawn from Baldwin, "Bargaining with Airline Hijackers," in I. William Zartman, ed., *The 50% Solution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday 1976), 416-21. One example of the extent to which students of international relations have accepted the compellence/deterrence arguments of Schelling is provided by the following passage: "Enough has already been said to indicate the disparities between American and Soviet strategic doctrines in the nuclear age. These differences may be most pithily summarized by stating that whereas we view nuclear weapons as a deterrent, the Russians see them as a 'compellant' [sic]—with all the consequences that follow." Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, Vol. 64 (July 1977), 34. It will be argued here that the consequences that follow are by no means obvious.

<sup>87</sup> Schelling (fn. 18), 195-99; and Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1966), 69-91.

in mind a threat that is intended to *reduce* the probability of occurrence of an event that was not very likely to occur in the first place—e.g., nuclear attack, murder, or airline hijacking. When we describe an influence attempt as compellence, however, we usually have in mind a threat intended to *increase* the probability of occurrence of an event that was not very likely to occur anyway. Schelling is quite right in observing that “it is easier to *deter* than to *compel*,”<sup>88</sup> but that is more of a truism than an empirical observation. The person who tries to prevent unlikely things from happening will probably succeed; while the person who tries to cause unlikely things to happen will probably fail.

There are nontrivial differences between trying to do hard things (like changing South Africa’s policy of white supremacy), and trying to do easy things (like preventing the Russians from launching a nuclear attack). Almost all of the differences between compellent and deterrent threats suggested by Schelling can be accounted for by the difference in the autonomous probability of the outcome one is trying to influence.<sup>89</sup> The observation that deterrent threats are more likely to succeed than compellent threats seems less profound when one lays bare the implicit assumption that deterrent threats are used for easy tasks while compellent threats are used for hard tasks.

Most of the discussion of the different requirements in timing of deterrence and compellence can be reduced to the truisms that considerable effort will be required to accomplish hard things, while one can accomplish easy things with much less effort. Why do compellent threats have to be “put in motion to be credible”?<sup>90</sup> Because they need

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 100; emphasis in original.

<sup>89</sup> The autonomous probability of the outcome X is defined as the probability that X would have occurred in the absence of any attempt by A to make it occur. Thus, the autonomous probability of X in a situation in which A is trying to influence B to do X is the probability that B would have done X anyway. See Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations* (2d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1978), 29-31, 159. Strictly speaking, the autonomous probability of B’s performance of X is not the same as the probability of success of A’s attempt to get B to do X. A high autonomous probability need not indicate a high probability of success for A, and a low autonomous probability does not necessarily mean that it will be hard for A to get B to do X. B’s strong dislike of A may make him reluctant to do X if he knows A wants him to; likewise, B’s respect for A may make him eager to do X after he learns of A’s desire. Other things being equal, however, it is generally harder to make unlikely events occur than it is to make likely events occur. For purposes of this article, therefore, it will be arbitrarily assumed that influence attempts aimed at bringing about outcomes of low autonomous probability have a low probability of success; while influence attempts aimed at bringing about outcomes of high autonomous probability have a high probability of success.

<sup>90</sup> Schelling (fn. 87), 72.

a lot of credibility. Why do they need so much credibility? Because they are so unlikely to succeed in the first place!

Schelling also argues that it is likely to be especially difficult to comply with a compellent threat:

There is another characteristic of compellent threats, arising in the need for affirmative action, that often distinguishes them from deterrent threats. It is that the very act of compliance—of doing what is demanded—is more conspicuously compliant, more recognizable as submission under duress, than when an act is merely withheld in the face of a deterrent threat. Compliance is likely to be less casual, less capable of being rationalized as something that one was going to do anyhow.<sup>91</sup>

Since Schelling uses the term “compellent threat” to refer to situations in which A is trying to get B to do something he is very unlikely to do, and the term “deterrent” threat to refer to situations in which A is trying to get B to do something he was likely to do anyway, the above passage is not surprising. Of course it is harder to rationalize compliance with compellent threats as something one intended to do anyhow, especially since compliance was something one had no intention of doing. It is much easier to give the appearance of doing what comes naturally if one really *is* doing what comes naturally. All of Schelling’s comments about ease of compliance must be reversed if one compares the compellent threat—“Breathe or I’ll shoot”—with the deterrent threat—“Don’t breathe or I’ll shoot.” It is virtually tautological to say that the higher the autonomous probability of B’s performance of X, the harder it will be to detect whether B’s performance of X resulted from A’s influence attempt. Schelling is quite right in saying that compliance is difficult in what he calls compellence situations. This difficulty, however, is not a characteristic of compellent threats; it is a characteristic of the particular type of influence situations that are being labeled “compellent.” The difficulty of compliance with a compellent threat disappears if we change the situation from “Stand on your head and whistle Yankee Doodle or I’ll shoot” to “Breathe or I’ll shoot.”<sup>92</sup> Compliance is conspicuous in some compellent threat situations; in others it is not.

Another difference between compellent and deterrent threats, according to Schelling, is that the former tend to be more ambiguous

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>92</sup> “Breathe or I’ll shoot” is actually just a variation of “act normally or I’ll shoot”—a compellent threat often found in TV dramas depicting the criminal hiding in the closet while the prisoner answers the doorbell.

than the latter. Once again, particular kinds of situations seem to be implied:

In addition to the question of "when," compellence usually involves questions of where, what, and how much. "Do nothing" is simple; "Do something" ambiguous. "Stop where you are" is simple; "Go back" leads to "How far?" "Leave me alone" is simple; "Cooperate" is inexact and open-ended.<sup>93</sup>

"Do nothing," however, is not that simple. It leads to "What do you mean; I have to do something, don't I?" or "I can't just do nothing!" "Do nothing that will upset me" is more ambiguous than "Get the hell out of here!" "Stop where you are" is not so simple when said by a hijacker to the pilot of a plane at 30,000 feet. "Leave me alone" is not so simple when said by a tired father to a small child. It invariably leads to "Does that mean I must leave the room or merely that I must stop talking to you?" "Is it all right if I talk to myself?" "How about if I just listen to records?" In such a situation, "Leave me alone" is ambiguous; "Go play in the yard" is simple. Even if one accepts the distinction between deterrent and compellent threats, there is no reason to believe that one type of threat is intrinsically clearer than the other.

The alleged greater clarity of deterrent threats carries over to assurances.<sup>94</sup> Because the assurances associated with compellent threats tend to be ambiguous, they tend to lack credibility. Blackmailers, as Schelling says, "find the 'assurances' troublesome when their threats are compellent"; but blackmailers also find assurances troublesome *even when their threats are not compellent*. The credibility of assurances is not a function of the kind of threat being made; it is a function of the same sorts of things that determine the credibility of threats and promises. The credibility of one's assurance that he will not explode a nuclear bomb if his demands are met grows out of the obvious unpleasantness of such an act, not out of the nature of the threat being made. Sadists, kidnapers, blackmailers, extortionists, and airline hijackers find that the credibility of their assurances is undermined by the obvious opportunities and incentives they have to renege on their assurance commitments, regardless of whether they have made deterrent or compellent threats.

Although the distinction between deterrence and compellence at first appears to be very helpful in analyzing world politics, further scrutiny raises serious questions about the utility of the distinction. The failure to provide a precise definition of compellence makes it hard to

<sup>93</sup> Schelling (fn. 87), 72-73.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

be sure, but a low probability of success seems to be inextricably bound up with the implied definition of this term. It is worthwhile to distinguish between threats and promises and between influence attempts with a high probability of success and those with a low probability of success. Until more precise definitions and more persuasive arguments are produced, however, students of international relations should be wary of the distinction between compellence and deterrence.<sup>95</sup>

### CONCLUSION

A review of selected works in recent scholarship in international relations reveals the continued existence of a number of traditional tendencies in the treatment of power. First, the tendency to exaggerate the fungibility of power resources and the related tendency to neglect considerations of scope are still with us. Despite twenty years of exhortation by the Sprouts, discussions of national capabilities without reference to explicitly stated or clearly implied policy-contingency frameworks are common. Second, the propensity to treat military power resources as the "ultimate" power base, and the related propensity to overestimate the effectiveness of military force, have not disappeared. And third, emphasis on conflict and negative sanctions at the expense of emphasis on cooperation and positive sanctions is not uncommon.

It was suggested that the contextual analysis of power advocated by Lasswell and Kaplan, Dahl, the Sprouts, and others would provide a useful corrective for traditional weaknesses in treatments of power by students of international relations. Such contextual analysis would have a number of implications for the way scholars of international relations talk about their subject. First, the division of the world into "great powers," "small powers," and "middle powers" would be called into question, since such terms usually connote generalized rather than situationally specific power. At the very least, users of such terms would be required to specify the issue-area they have in mind. Second, the idea of a single monolithic international "power structure" would be called into question, since such a concept implies either highly fungible power resources or a single dominant issue-area. Students of world politics must recognize, as students of American politics have recognized, "that the notion of 'the power structure' of a social unit is a

<sup>95</sup> The closest Schelling comes to a precise definition of compellence is in *Arms and Influence* (fn. 87), 70-71. I suspect that psychologists may have some persuasive arguments as to why it is useful to distinguish between deterrence and compellence. Schelling does not present such arguments, however.



dangerously misleading siren. There are as many power structures as there are issues fruitfully distinguished."<sup>96</sup> Keohane and Nye take two steps forward when they demonstrate that international power structures vary from one issue-area to another; but they slip one step backward when they imply that an overall structural approach that fails to distinguish among issue-areas and that is based on the assumption that power, like money, is highly fungible, can provide even a partial explanation of world politics.<sup>97</sup> It is time to recognize that the notion of a single overall international power structure unrelated to any particular issue-area is based on a concept of power that is virtually meaningless.<sup>98</sup> It is difficult to see how a model based on a virtually meaningless concept of power can provide even a partial explanation of international political relations. Instead of talking about *the* distribution of power resources underlying *the* international power structure, students of world politics could more profitably focus on the multiple distributional patterns of a wide variety of resources related to a number of significant issue-areas.

The point here is not to deny either the possibility or the desirability of generalizations about power patterns within very broadly—perhaps even vaguely—defined issue-areas. It is to suggest that healthy skepticism and scholarly caution should be proportionate to the broadness and vagueness of the specification of the issue-area. Rough indicators of power hierarchies in given issue-areas can be useful, but only if the limitations and pitfalls of such an approach are clearly understood and acknowledged.<sup>99</sup> The important thing is recognition that the absence of a common denominator of political value in terms of which different scopes of power could be compared is not so much a methodological problem to be solved as it is a real-world constraint to be lived with.<sup>100</sup> Economists, after all, did not invent money in order to solve the conceptual problem of aggregating economic values; they just hap-

<sup>96</sup> Frederick W. Frey, "Comment: On Issues and Nonissues in the Study of Power," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65 (December 1971), 1086. See also Raymond E. Wolfinger, "Nondecisions and the Study of Local Politics," and "Rejoinder to Frey's 'Comment,'" both in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65 (December 1971), 1063-80 and 1102-04, respectively.

<sup>97</sup> Keohane and Nye (fn. 12), 43-54, 222-25.

<sup>98</sup> Dahl (fn. 5), 33: "Any statement about influence that does not clearly indicate the domain and scope it refers to verges on being meaningless." For a similar comment, see Sprout and Sprout, "Environmental Factors . . ." (fn. 10), 325.

<sup>99</sup> For an impressive demonstration of generalization at a high level of abstraction based on explicit acknowledgment of the importance of scope and domain and the resulting multidimensional nature of power, see Alker (fn. 21).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Dahl (fn. 5), 32-36; Baldwin (fn. 16).

pen to be luckier than political scientists. If the real world has not chosen to provide political analysts with a political counterpart to money, it would be folly to pretend that it has.

Although power analysis is probably the oldest approach to the study of world politics, it is also one of the most promising for the years ahead. Refinements in the causal notion of power since 1950 have not yet been fully integrated into the literature on international relations, but there is no reason why this should not happen. Both social power literature and social exchange theory have much to offer the student of world politics. As Hayward Alker has recently observed, "Far from being nearly dead, weak, or inadequate as some critics have implied, power measurement has just begun."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Alker (fn. 21), 370-71.

---

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code). 1. Date of filing: September 22, 1978. 2. Title of publication: *World Politics*. 3. Frequency of issue: Quarterly. 4. Location of known office of publication: Corwin Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, Mercer, New Jersey 08540. 5. Location of the headquarters or general business office of the publishers: William & Charlton Streets, Princeton, Mercer, New Jersey 08540. 6. Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Princeton University Press, William & Charlton Streets, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. Editors, Klaus Knorr, Cyril E. Black, Gerald Garvey, and Henry S. Bienen, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. Executive editor, Elsbeth G. Lewin, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. 7. Owner: Princeton University Press (a non-profit corporation without stockholders). 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 10. A. Total number of copies printed (net press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 5,100; single issue nearest to filing date, 5,100. B. Paid circulation: (1) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: None. (2) Mail subscriptions: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 4,084; single issue nearest to filing date, 4,070. C. Total paid circulation: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 4,084; single issue nearest to filing date, 4,070. D. Free distribution by mail, carriers or other means: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 109; single issue nearest to filing date, 112. E. Total distribution: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 4,193; single issue nearest to filing date, 4,182. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. William C. Becker, Business Manager, Princeton University Press.

---