

Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies, by David A. Baldwin
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Lasswell and Kaplan's 1950 *Power and Society* reintroduced the notion of "power" into political theorizing, and much subsequent work concentrated on power as causal concept. The essay examines that subsequent literature, emphasizing that when considering power 'both scope and domain must be specified or implied.' (163)

Power: Potential, Probable, and Actual

One can explain the "paradox of unrealized power" (i.e., apparent capacity that does not translate into actual influence) in two ways: "malfunctioning conversion processes," which deny the power-wielding actor the competence or determination to use its power; or "conflicting policy-contingency frameworks," which create illusions of power out of resources that are valuable only under certain circumstances. Baldwin, following the lead of Harold and Margaret Sprout, finds the latter explanation more satisfying because some power resources are generally illiquid and non- or semi-fungible. The paradox reduces then to a failure to contextualize power resources adequately and a false presumption by some analysts that power applies equally in different situations. Further, the 'malfunctioning conversion processes' explanation allows analysts to account for *any* unexpected result by asserting that the losers' failure was due solely to weakness or ineptitude of their leadership.

Baldwin then applies this policy-contingency-frameworks analysis to various critiques of the world power structure. Knorr, in *The Power of Nations*, distinguishes between "putative" and "actualized" power, defining putative power as 'capabilities that permit the power-wielder to make effective threats.' (171) Knorr considers this property as something that a polity can accumulate, but Baldwin criticizes this view as tending towards a conception of power as a 'undifferentiated quantifiable mass.' (171) For similar reasons, Baldwin rejects Cline's mathematically deterministic paradigm from *World Power Assessment*. Though Kindleberger's arguments in *Power and Money* receive a somewhat kinder assessment, Baldwin still disdains Kindleberger's divorce of power from any particular purpose.

In discussing worst-case analysis – 'the assumption that preparing for the worst is a wise and prudent strategy' – Baldwin again emphasizes the multidimensional nature of political power. (174) One can not save up one's power to anticipate and ameliorate an unforeseen future catastrophe: only certain types of power will be useful in the crisis, and if one cannot predict the crisis, one cannot determine what constitutes utile power. The resultant policy prescription to expand all types of power to meet possible threats presents costs that outweigh the benefits and indeed cannot be borne.

Power and Interdependence

Baldwin considers "interdependence" in terms of 'relationships that are costly for each party to forego.' (176) Therefore, either party in an interdependent association can impose costs on – and therefore exert power over – the other party by withdrawing from the relationship. Keohane and Nye's conception of sensitive vs. vulnerable interdependence, though acknowledged as useful, comes under attack for not considering policy-contingency frameworks properly. Baldwin praises Dahl's conception of power, however, as sufficiently domain-specific as to allow meaningful analyses of interdependence.

Military Power

Military power is but one facet of power to Baldwin; thus, he dismisses Cline's and Gilpin's view of 'force as the "ultimate" form of power' and criticizes theoretically and empirically even the weaker Keohane-Nye formulation that 'force dominates other means of power.' (180-1)

Positive Sanctions

Baldwin follows Knorr in decrying the scantiness of work studying rewards and promised rewards. The positive sanctions discussed are mainly economic foreign aid. Since it is empirically very rare for a polity to grant foreign aid unconditionally, these positive sanctions are exercises of power.

Power as a Zero-Sum Game

The imagining of politics as a zero-sum game strikes Baldwin as simplistic: doing so ignores all cooperative aspects of international situations. While this has its uses, it deprecates positive sanctions and often leads to profitless analysis. Baldwin invokes Schelling in asserting that even total war balances cooperative and competitive elements.

Compellence and Deterrence

Baldwin reads “compellence” as the attempt to make the unlikely come to pass and “deterrence” as the attempt to prevent the improbable. He therefore considers the argument ‘compellence is harder than deterrence’ as verging on tautology.

Conclusion

Baldwin’s major conclusions are: recent analysts still exaggerate the fungibility of political power and compound their folly by regarding military power as paramount; relatively more research should be directed towards positive sanctions; and that power analysis can still be invaluable if used as prescribed.