

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition, third edition, (Boston: Little-Brown, 1989), ch. 1 & 2. pp. 3-32

Breakdown:

Chapter 1: Interdependence in World Politics

Major Questions: what are the characteristics of world politics under conditions of extensive interdependence? And, how and why do international regimes change?

Interdependence as an Analytic Concept

Interdependence refers to situations where states or actors are determined by external events in a reciprocal relationship with other states or actors, jointly limiting their autonomy. It is created through the expansion of international transactions, insofar as the costs associated with them constrain political activity. While these relationships impose costs, the benefits may exceed them.

Power and Interdependence

The traditional view of power (as defined as military strength) is too limited in this context. Power can be military coercion or it can be the ability to control outcomes – which is related to asymmetrical interdependence, where the less dependent actors in an interdependent relationship can use their position to influence others.

Dimensions of the role of power in interdependence

Sensitivity – the speed and magnitude with which a change in one country is felt in another, within one policy framework. IMPT. Assumes that policy framework is constant.

Vulnerability – the relative availability and costliness of alternative policy frameworks, when it becomes necessary to adapt to external changes.

Vulnerability interdependence is more important in providing power resources to actors; with effective alternatives, sensitivity effects can be overcome. Vulnerability can take on a strategic dimension, as less vulnerable states can impose costs on others by exploiting their sensitivity.

Sensitivity can also pose problems for leaders of pluralistic political systems, when interdependence harms domestic groups that will subsequently clamor for protection from the government.

So when does a leader use one type of asymmetrical interdependence over another? The higher the stakes, the more likely that the military will be involved. Depending on how the leader expects their opponent to react, they can also use sensitivity or vulnerability, but the former only when their opponent is unlikely to choose an alternate policy, or is constrained by rules or norms.

International Regime Change

Interdependent relationships sometimes occur within networks of rules, norms, and procedures to regulate behavior and control effects – regimes. While international law and organizations are in general rather weak, in specific areas, regimes (either formal or informal) have had a lot of influence. These regimes are the immediate factors between the power structure of the international system and the pol/econ bargaining within in; but they are also clearly products of the power structure of the system. Gradual or rapid changes in regimes, therefore, are important in interpreting their influence.

Chapter 2: Realism and Complex Interdependence

Realist assumptions lead to an often-inadequate set of theories that should be considered an ideal type. Complex interdependence provides an opposing set of theories, but also an ideal type.

Realist assumptions:

States are unitary actors that dominate international politics.

Force is an acceptable instrument of policy.

World politics has a hierarchy of issues, with military concerns taking the top spot.

The Characteristics of Complex Interdependence

Multiple Channels

Multiplicity of connections between societies. Interstate relations (commonly assumed by realists). Transgovernmental relations, bureaucrats in contact, or even in coalitions, across national borders (relaxes the state as unitary actor assumption of realism). Transnational relations, nongovernmental elites meeting about policy or business, also multinational corporations or international organizations. These actors make governments more sensitive to each other, and these effects are facilitated by global communications.

Absence of Hierarchy among Issues

Foreign affairs agendas are more extensive and diverse. Sometimes some are important to one domestic group, or these groups are diametrically opposed to a certain policy. These concerns complicate foreign affairs, making coherence/consistency difficult.

Minor Role of Military Force

Among industrialized, pluralist countries, safety has increased and force is not feared. Sometimes force is not an appropriate policy instrument for in economic or environmental transnational relations. Military power is still relevant, but its use can often complicate nonsecurity goals.

The Political Processes of Complex Interdependence

How do political processes translate power resources into power (outcome control), dealing with the many sets of goals for states in complex interdependence?

Linkage Strategies

Traditional linkage: Strong states using military dominance to prevail in unrelated issues where they have weaker influence.

However, using economic dominance will be limited by domestic, transnational, and transgovernmental actors resistant to having their interests traded off. Outcomes will vary from one issue to another, as military strength loses its value. Linkage will become more useful for weaker states, as they extract side payments from rich states.

Agenda Setting

Without a clear hierarchy of issues, agenda formation is subject to international and domestic problems, as disaffected groups (transnational or domestic) politicize particular issues, either in the domestic realm or within international regimes.

Transnational and Transgovernmental Relations

Coalition partners available across borders. Statesmen cannot pursue linkage or manipulate interdependence, since they must consider the effects of their policies on different transnational groups, clouding the concept of national interest. Transgovernmental policy networks grow, as similar bureaucracies come into contact.

Role of International Organizations

Help set international agenda, catalysts for coalition formation, arenas for policy initiatives and linkage by weak states. Define salient issues, group issues together. They can contribute to the determination of governmental priorities.