

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE  
Department of Political and Social Sciences

**Power Analysis as a Critique of Power Politics:  
Understanding Power and Governance in the Second Gulf War**

Stefano Guzzini

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining  
the Degree of Doctor of the European University Institute  
Department of Political and Social Sciences

*Examining Jury*

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Prof. Pierre Hassner (CERI, IEP, Paris)

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Prof. Susan Strange (University of Warwick, external professor EUI, supervisor)

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Florence, October 1994

*Stefano Guzzini*



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# **Part I**

## **Introduction**

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# 1

## Puzzles of a Power Analysis



### 1. Making sense of power puzzles: origins (and limits) of a conceptual analysis

Every sizable intellectual enterprise starts with one or more basic puzzles. My first puzzle was the ubiquity of power in international explanations. It was a central concept for understanding and, indeed, for characterising international politics; and yet, everyone used it differently. Despite its inconsistency, however, much of the International Relations (IR) literature seemed to assume a consensus about its meaning and its explanatory role. There was common agreement that power is “important” or “significant” — but just what exactly this importance had to be spelled out was left to the individual writer.

Out of this general questioning grew the more concrete puzzle that underlies this study. Realism reserves a central place to power in its explanations. It refers either to the basic drive behind human behaviour, the central means, and for some also the intermediate aim of all foreign policy. Since the 1970s, however, power has increasingly been used as a central concept for the *critique* of Realism. The first and easy explanation was, of course, that this refers just to distinct meanings of power. More recent conceptualisations challenged established meanings. If power means different things for different people, then it might also be used as both a defence and a critique of Realism. The situation turned out less simple, and more interesting, than that.

As chapter 2 will try to argue, I think that since the beginning of the 1970s, Realism lost its paradigmatic position in International Relations (IR) without being replaced by another dominant paradigm. Among the attempts to redefine the core of the discipline (and enlarge its borders) were approaches gathered under the label “International Political Economy” (IPE). This new field included neomarxist approaches and dependency theories, but also the work of international economists concerned with the political regulation of international economic relations even more urgently needed after the demise of the

Bretton-Woods regime.<sup>1</sup> Within this pool of writers were also many who, until then, were considered to be regular IR scholars, more or less influenced by Realism. One of the hypotheses I want to develop in the following chapters, is that there has been a *rapprochement* between those “Classical” IR writers and some more radical IPE. This *rapprochement* has been most fruitful for the discussion of power in the discipline. Hence some of the “new” concepts of power, often called structural power, are to be seen as attempts by some *Realists themselves* to update their central explanatory variable.

By the start of the “Second Cold War”<sup>2</sup>, however, the discipline returned to more traditional waters. Neorealism and the debates around it resurrected a central place for power and Realism by substituting for the more traditional methodology an explicit import of economic modelling. Here the “market” does not enter as a central explanatory variable, as in IPE, but as the methodological analogy upon which a more scientific Realist theory could be based. It is at this point, that poststructuralist approaches used concepts of power to criticise this disciplinary move toward closure.

Hence, I think one can make sense of the second puzzle by stating that (1) the development of IPE at the end of the Realist predominance, and (2) the poststructuralist critique of the Neorealist turn provide the background for understanding the turn of “power” from a guide to a critique of Realism. *The present thesis tries to explore the possibilities of drawing these two strands together.* It will be argued that it is possible to make sense of the different new concepts of power. They can be understood as indirect institutional power, nonintentional power, and impersonal power. Since their meta-theoretical underpinnings diverge, one cannot reduce all the meanings to one concept. It is, however, possible to include their insights into a coherent power analysis around two (necessary) concepts, power and governance.

For carrying out this conceptual analysis, the thesis relies on what has been termed the “methodological turn” in IR.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the following analysis will be referring to different levels: the meta-theoretical, the theoretical (explanatory), and the conceptual. It assumes that concepts derive their *exact* meaning from the theories in which they are embedded. They can have *compatible* meanings if they share a common meta-theoretical framework, as for instance different methodological individualist and/or rational choice do. Therefore, the clarification of the meanings of the concept of power starts with their actual uses, and will try to achieve coherence with the respective underlying meta-theoretical framework.

Hence, to apply this particular power analysis to an empirical case, means to embed it into explanatory theories. The way power analysis is conducted here, provides

<sup>1</sup> For convenience, one could even say that IPE’s birthday was the US administration’s decision to stop convertibility and finally to put Bretton Woods to the archives.

<sup>2</sup> This is Fred Halliday’s suitable description, see Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Richard Little, “International Relations and the Methodological Turn”, *Political Studies*, vol. XXXIX, no. 3 (September 1991), pp. 463-478.

conceptual means for understanding different meanings of power; it cannot, however, overcome metatheoretical divides underlying different theories. By referring to actual theories, or often to frameworks of analysis, the present thesis tries to show that IR/IPE, if it wants to keep the insights of these power approaches, would be best served if it extended its frameworks into historical sociology and poststructuralist theory.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the empirical part of the thesis seeks to show that the epistemological turn of the 1980s might be fruitfully followed by an explicitly interpretivist *sociological turn* in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the thesis argues that *taking power seriously implies leaving the theoretical and meta-theoretical frameworks of Neorealism*. It is meant to invite Realist writers to reconsider the Neorealist turn of their theory. It invites “reflectivists” of all kinds to think about the link between their epistemological and conceptual discussions and an intersubjective analysis of those empirical events which the discipline is used to study, as, for instance, war.

This particular aim and purpose, to provide a ground on which interpretive theories could debate, means, however, that some of the major recent theoretical discussions are barely touched. I chose the epistemological ground for my discussion. This neither means that it is the only important, or even less, that it is the unique possibility for interpretive theories to meet. The other prominent candidate is political theory or philosophy, often called normative theory or ethics within IR/IPE. The main reason for this focus is that, compared with the rapprochement that is attempted in the following chapters, normative discussions are already well developed in IR/IPE, and were successfully applied to the Second Gulf War.<sup>6</sup> Although I will refer to and partly rely on this literature, it is always done with the focus on my own approach. I hope that the following discussions are not read as an exclusion of normative concerns.

A final limit of the approach is that a conceptual analysis, as conceived here, does not provide the very thing many scholars were hunting after: a new core for the discipline. Consequently, it cannot claim to provide the most privileged place for the study of IR/IPE. Similarly, a conceptual analysis is no substitute for an explanatory theory, although it should be helpful in discussing the pieces of such theories. Power is no shortcut for such a theory.

<sup>4</sup> My understanding of poststructuralism will be introduced in Part II and in particular in Part V.

<sup>5</sup> For an argument to sold out the culturalist turn in IR/IPE on the grounds of historical sociology (and with reference to poststructuralist theory), see Anna Leander, “Bertrand Badie: Cultural Diversity Changing International Relations?” (Florence: European University Institute, Working Paper SPS 94/6), forthcoming in Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver, *Masters in the Making: International Theorists Reassessed* (London:Routledge).

<sup>6</sup> For the Second Gulf War, see for instance David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).

## 2. A historical moment foregone? The Second Gulf War and the *trasformismo* of the “New World Order”

A final puzzle is a question which emerged at the end of the analysis of governance through the Second Gulf War. Is it possible that the foreign policy routines and academic analytical dispositions which were mobilised during the Second Gulf War reduced the meaning and the effect of the end of the Cold War? This is, of course, a counterfactual statement, but that is common currency in power statements.

The Cold War ended with a completely unexpected policy initiative in Moscow. Soviet “New Thinking” decided to give up that for which generations of Soviet citizens, willingly or not, have been struggling, namely a *glacis* in Eastern Europe. That politicians and academics were caught mainly unprepared should have been expected. This happens in all social sciences. Yet there were also specific aggravating circumstances. Realism is a theory which has a cyclical view of history: the past returns in new disguises. This meant that changes are generally underplayed, because they are believed not to fundamentally affect the basic features of international policy. The end of the Cold War was therefore quickly explained as the “outpowering” of one of the superpower contenders by another. Briefly, the Western military and political escalation was too much to stomach for the Soviets.

This interpretation has been criticised by many Sovietologists. High military and economic competition was nothing new in Soviet history. In the past, it produced periods of higher domestic repression. Indeed, the Second Cold War was first answered with an attempt to match the West. There was not much discussion about reform before 1985-86. The final decision to go for *glasnost* and *perestroika* came, following MccGwire, in January 1987. It was a largely autonomous decision, taken when the US budget deficit had eventually stopped the US arms race (which the Soviets knew).<sup>7</sup> It might be that repression was not possible with the new interlocking international political economy, i.e. that globalisation had reached and overcome the Soviet state. Yet, here we are already outside the Realist approach, because it is not power politics, but the globalisation of markets which is the explanatory factor. Still, one would need to show that the Soviet Union could not come back to a more autarchic policy. After all, it had a tradition of being a brutal totalitarian regime.<sup>8</sup>

Why did Gorbachev not try to massacre opposition in the USSR, as did the Chinese on Tienanmen Square? Several studies have tried to show that Soviet “New Thinking” has taken several insights from peace research (and from the CSCE process) rather more seriously than official Westerners policies.<sup>9</sup> Realists will say that this the usual make-up

<sup>7</sup> This thesis can be found in Michael MccGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> This was another of the easily available goods on the social science market: totalitarian regimes have never changed. It is a one way street (except if war destroys them).

<sup>9</sup> For this point, see for instance the preface to the second edition of Allan Lynch, *The Soviet study of*

for not admitting the humiliation of having been overpowered. Maybe. It seems, though, that the Soviets were quite convinced about their new strategy and their regained diplomatic initiative.

Be that as it may, there were people who argued already at the time, that this was a historical moment for institutionalisation of new foreign policy procedures and power management. Now, buried under the ruins of the war in former Yugoslavia, the CSCE was considered in 1989-1992 a possible candidate for the management of international disputes in Europe. This euphoria might have been particularly strong in Germany. There are also good reasons for this. German observers were already trained to consider such possible changes.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher was already Foreign Minister when the Helsinki accord was signed, when *détente* was discarded, and when the very heated Cold War debates accompanied the stationing of Pershing and Cruise Missiles in Europe. Yet, he could arrange with his Soviet counterpart, in what in diplomatic time-frames were just some “historical minutes” the 2 plus 2 agreement, that is, German unification — within NATO. For those who had experienced the intra-German deadlocks of the last decades that was not only unexpected, but it showed that politically prepared decision-makers could make a difference. It showed that the self-referential system of enemy images could be interrupted. At that time, Genscher relaunched a topic that German *détente* politicians had already used at the beginning of their *Ostpolitik*: “Europainnenpolitik” (European domestic politics). Former Chancellor Willy Brandt referred to this concept and also to “World domestic politics” during his speech at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony. By these, admittedly vague, concepts, is meant the establishment of a security system in Europe where borders play a much lesser role. The increasing interlocking of political and social systems implies that “politics” had to be thought, and bit by bit also conducted, in more transnational terms.<sup>10</sup>

When Genscher used these concepts, he thought about Yugoslavia. The Paris Charter of the CSCE was finished, a permanent secretariat of the CSCE established, and a new rule for votes within the CSCE was accepted. In this rule, it was possible to decide about CSCE interventions within the member states, *without* there being a veto-right of the concerned countries. Consequently, one scholar had been pushing for taking this historical moment seriously, because it could be used to institutionalise foreign policy practices which made the security system much better working in Europe. But against an inter-

*international relations*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> For a reference to Brandt’s concepts during *détente*, see Pierre Hassner, *Europe in the Age of Negotiation*. The Washington Papers No. 8 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972). For the present discussion, see Dieter Senghaas, “Weltinnenpolitik—Ansätze für ein Konzept”, *Europa-Archiv*, vol. 47, no. 22 (25 November 1992), pp. 643-652.



national “autism” of established practices, which the Second Gulf War evoked, this change did not happen.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the fundamental claim that derived from the study of governance through the Second Gulf War is that the particular understanding and handling of the Second Gulf War might have contributed to forgetting the more revolutionary implications of the end of the Cold War. There was an important change. This change was the result of contrived and conscious policies. Politics was something else than the adaptation to the never ending security dilemma.

A power analysis around a pair of concepts can indicate how the challenged Realist world was reconstructed through the Second Gulf War. Its critique of this reconstruction is a critique of power politics in the double sense. On the one hand, it questions the power effects of (Realist) power analysis itself which returns to well-established schemes: Munich, or Vietnam. On the other hand, the working of those dispositions is “politicised” through their integration into power analysis. Power is a concept that is generally used to define what counts as a political issue, what it is “possible” to change. Bringing these “impersonal” effects explicitly into the analysis of power leads to a view of events very different from that of individualist or rational choice approaches — both of which are led to interpret keyaspects of the situation as random or fortuitous. To claim that something is a phenomenon of power or luck, influences future political behaviour about it. As such, the present power analysis, as conducted through the Second Gulf War, has moved *from being a guide to a critique of Power Politics*.<sup>12</sup>

Hence the “New World Order” proclaimed by the Bush administration was more important than just purely make-up, yet not because it really meant a new world order. Under its disguise, established ways of seeing and acting in international politics have become legitimated again. It is *trasformismo* in the real sense. It is an attempt to sell old for new and to change the outlook in order to preserve the old. But, in opposition to the old Realist idea of an endlessly circular history, it also a counterfactual: it could have been otherwise. It is a contrived result of the not necessarily intentional mobilisation of existing dispositions, not a natural law of international politics.

<sup>11</sup> Dieter Senghaas had introduced the concept of “autism” in international affairs. It will be discussed in Part V. For his invitation to profit from the dynamics of the time, see Dieter Senghaas, *Friedensprojekt Europa* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> There is now an emerging literature on the impact of the end of the Cold War on international theory. Several writers have come to similar conclusions, namely that Realist policy and theory is not only insufficient, but in fact a hindrance to the understanding and realisation of change in international affairs. With regard to this debate, the present study can provide a particular frameowrk of analysis to understand the interplay between Realism and world affairs, and an empirical case, the Second Gulf War, whose effect has been to routinise the particular historical moment of 1989. See for the debate all the contributions to a symposium on the topic, published in a special issue of *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994), in particular, Roy Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, “Understanding Change in international politics: the Soviet empire’s demise and the international system”, pp. 215-247; and Richard Ned Lebow, “The long peace, the end of the cold war, and the failure of realism”, pp. 249-277.

### 3. The outline of the argument

The purely theoretical Part II of the thesis starts with the presentation of the assumptions of this conceptual analysis in an overview of the historical and disciplinary background within which the present power debate in IR/IPE developed (chapter 2). Both the perception of more diffused forms of power in international politics and the disciplinary closures of Neorealism provoked the renewed concern with the concept of power. Chapter 3 will then introduce the theoretical assumptions of this conceptual analysis of power. It is argued that the meta-theory and theory-dependence of power implies that phenomena described by power cannot be coherently subsumed under one general concept. An analysis of power which tries to show its role in explanations must therefore rely on a form of “explanatory perspectivism”.

Part III introduces the power debate in IR/IPE. After a discussion of the Classical Realist’s concept of power (chapter 4), the Neorealist concept of power will be introduced (chapter 5) and criticised (chapter 6). It will be shown that Neorealism has, in fact, the most limited concept of power. Concepts of “structural power” include indirect institutional power, nonintentional power and impersonal power. Whereas the first one is part of the Neorealist research programme, the others cannot be coherently accounted for within it, at least as part of the concept of power. They appear as random variables, or just simply as “luck”. Chapter 6 proposes also a way of coherently integrating this different aspects of power. The solution consists of a power analysis, that necessarily includes two concepts, agent power and impersonal governance.

Part IV and V illustrate the different meanings of power with the case of the Second Gulf War. The Neorealist power account (Part IV) is embedded in a Neorealist security analysis. The analysis of governance relies on frameworks of epistemology, interpretivist sociology and political economy. These two parts aim at showing that although one can construct a detailed, and I think also partly fruitful, Neorealist security analysis, it cannot claim to include all power phenomena. Since power is used to define the borders of political issues, this implies not only that the analysis will leave out realms of action in the understanding of the conflict, but that this very understanding itself forecloses potential political actions in world affairs. The proposed power analysis with a pair of concepts allows for such a reflexive turn which questions these theoretical power effects. It is in this context, that in particular the analysis of governance questions the feedback effect of the understanding of the Second Gulf War (both by intervening and observing agents) on the effects of the end of the Cold War.

## **Part II**

# **A conceptual analysis of power during the crisis of Realism**

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## Introduction to Part II

This analysis proposes a conceptual analysis of power in the context of a discipline, International Relations (IR), in crisis. It attempts to show that the present power debate did not originate in the 1980s, but started at the end of the 1960s, when Realism was no longer able to keep its position as the central legitimate research programme. The present power debate in IR can be put in the context of the widening agenda of IR since the period of detente, the decline of US supremacy after Vietnam, and the break-up of Bretton Woods. Peace research's question of alternative foreign and strategic policies started to include issues like famine or cultural/economic development and foreign policy themes like "confidence-building measures". The definition of "international politics" expanded, including "high" and "low" politics. Within the discipline of International Relations, this was signalled by the attempts to broaden the very subject-matter's name: from "International Politics", often conceived as an outgrowth of International Law or Diplomatic History, via "International Relations" and "World Politics", to "International Political Economy".

Power and "politics" have a strong mutual defining link in Realist theory, so much so as to be often used together as a single concept. For Realists, politics is about the individual (national) pursuit of power and its collective management. Or, expressed the other way round: outcomes in international politics are decided by power differentials and their distribution. Broadening the research agenda implied a critique of this approach or, at least, of its limits. In this critique, politics is done by other actors than states. States, in turn, have an international policy which in the time of "embedded liberalism" encompasses more than strictly military or diplomatic security. This implies new forms of collective management of international politics, as through regimes for instance. Present international affairs have known the increased role of politics and power, more widely conceived.

Meanwhile, the transnationalisation of politics undermines the very control capacities of states and other international actors. A first look at the power differentials no longer explains the outcomes. It seems, as if "structural" factors are increasingly shaping and moving world events. The research community reacted particularly to the realisation that the US, and more generally the West, could no longer conduct foreign policy unilaterally, and that even its domestic policies were increasingly affected from abroad.

*It is this context of both an expansion of "politics" as a potential field of action, and a perceived contraction of "politics" as real room of manoeuvre that has triggered the various new power research programmes.* These concentrate both on the new direct and indirect ways to control agendas and regimes and on the increasingly perceived impersonal rule of the international scene.

Therefore, Part I will show how the call for new power concepts can be seen in relationship with the present identity crisis of IR/IPE. For this purpose, we need first to develop an understanding of the present state of IR/IPE. Chapter 2 argues against the usual presentation of IR schools in three ideologies or paradigms. Although initially an important step in acknowledging and legitimating debates and pluralism in the discipline, this self-description of the discipline has become an easy excuse for limiting academic

debates. It does not illuminate many of those theoretical exchanges within which the reconceptualisations of power actually took place. Chapter 3 touches the methodological underpinnings of this conceptual analysis. It argues that power is an ambivalent concept which derives its exact meaning from the meta-theoretical frameworks and substantial theories in which it is embedded. Furthermore, the particular concept of power makes it particularly appealing in a crisis of the definition of politics. As will be shown, not the concept as such but the *attribution* of power as the origins of effects and outcomes is inherently linked to politics by its property of suggesting responsibilities and requiring justifications. Attributing power is part of a redefinition of the “art of the possible”. New concepts of power, as they arise in the 1970s and 1980s in IR/IPE, are therefore both a reflection of changing world politics and part of this very change by their feedback on the definition of what politically can be done.

## 2

### International Theory after the Inter-Paradigm Debate



If we had to follow the conventional self-description of the IR discipline, a conceptual analysis should compare a Realist, a liberal and a structuralist concept of power. One could certainly construct such concepts. They would neither reflect the purposes, nor the debates, for which new concepts of power appeared since the crisis of Realism.

Instead of adding just another triad to the already impressive list<sup>1</sup>, the present study follows a sociological approach playing out the relation of the internal history of international theory (the discursive practice) and the external history (the contextual setting of the academics and their discipline). With this approach, the Inter-Paradigm Debate (IPD) appears not as the discovery of unbridgeable theoretical differences, but as a *reification of historical categories*. In the 1970s-1980s, Kuhn's theory of scientific (r)evolution heralded a much longed for period of theoretical pluralism in IR. Whether wittingly or not however, this window was quickly closed by reducing meta-theoretical claims to normative differences. The debates which have triggered the crisis of Realism and from which the present power reconceptualisations derives, are still largely unresolved.

To understand the context of power reconceptualisations, the present chapter attempts to show first the insufficiencies of the established self-description of the discipline in triads. After presenting the main argument of the IPD and its self-indulgent use of the concepts of paradigm and incommensurability, I will try to show that after the decline of Realism and the concomitant extension of significant variables and subfields, debates in International Theory can be best understood as *ongoing attempts to delimit the field of inquiry*. The discipline is looking for self-defining and justifying boundaries. This search

<sup>1</sup> For a list of such triads, see Volker Rittberger & Hartwig Hummel, "Die Disziplin 'Internationale Beziehungen' im deutschsprachigen Raum auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität: Entwicklung und Perspektiven", in Volker Rittberger (ed.), *Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen. Bestandsaufnahme und Forschungsperspektiven* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), p. 23.

spurred a recent epistemological turn in International Theory.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will suggest that a map of the metatheoretical positioning of today's approaches gives a better understanding of present debates than the IPD.

After the crisis of the Realist paradigm, which had resolved this problem by individualising states and locating them in a state of nature (i.e. of war), there is still no replacement. Deprived of paradigmatic certainty, we try to delimit the field. As in Realism, concepts of power, have been used again to provide the core of the discipline.

## 1. "Colour it Kuhn"

The persistent and failed attempts to replace the declining Realist school, despite its widely known internal insufficiencies, and the unsuccessful response of Realism to these attacks, let some scholars believe in the irreducibility of different schools. In this context, Kuhn's concept of paradigm attracted many writers in IR, because it could provide a rationale for the endless debates about assumptions. Yet, in their attempt to use Kuhn for describing IR, Kuhn's insights were distorted, and some genuinely newer debates in IR/IPE deflected.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1. The concept of paradigm

Kuhn works with a double concept of paradigm. The first, and most widely used, refers to the underlying research programme which derives from a particular scientific achievement. It defines the relevant academic agenda, and suggests the "puzzles" to be solved. Besides this knowledge function, the paradigm has a sociological function as a focal point for the consensus of the scientific community. "This consensus need not involve an acceptance of any explicit formulation of the paradigm's content but is rather a general acknowledgement of the exemplary role of the approach taken by the paradigm."<sup>4</sup> This permits the self-definition and legitimation of the scientific community and its research.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Richard Little, "International Relations and the Methodological Turn", *Political Studies*, vol. XXXIX, no. 3 (September 1991), pp. 463-478.

<sup>3</sup> In an astonishing contrast to Kuhn and the Kuhnian turn in IR of the 1970s-1980s, Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach criticise Kuhn for his supposedly cumulative and context-independent history of science. See *The Elusive Quest: Theory and International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 13-40, 212-218. It was exactly for the supposedly excessive importance given to contextual factors, that Lakatos attacked Kuhn's view of scientific revolutions as "mob-psychology" ("Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes", in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, p. 178). Kuhnian and Anti-Kuhnian fashions change, but the stories told are, in fact, often the same.

<sup>4</sup> Gary Gutting, "Introduction", in Gary Gutting (ed.), *Paradigms and Revolutions. Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962/70), pp. 37, 19.



Kuhn's central idea of a scientific revolution introduces a second aspect of "paradigms" which is "far wider than and ideologically prior to theory, i.e. a whole *Weltanschauung*."<sup>6</sup> For Kuhn, revolutions, i.e. the replacement of one paradigm by another, are changes of "world view": "When Aristotle and Galilei looked at swinging stones, the first saw constrained fall, the second a pendulum."<sup>7</sup> This is, what Kuhn refers to as a "gestalt-switch".

Since paradigms constitute the basic tool of "normal science", normal science alone cannot correct the paradigm. Paradigm shifts take place after a crisis. This crisis is not necessarily induced by events in the real world which would have a direct impact on research.<sup>8</sup> It only happens when the underlying "world-view" which permitted the scientists to construct the real world and to orient themselves within this construct is shattered.<sup>9</sup> The new paradigm is not chosen because it necessarily explains more or better, but because it resolves these "anomalies" and promises greater achievements. Which achievements are highly valued and which anomalies are considered necessary to resolve requires a sociological analysis that integrates the disciplinary and non-disciplinary environment.

Hence, Kuhn's position is conventionalist. It is not relativist because scientific progress is decided by the informed judgment of the scientific community. It is not rationalist either, because the rationality of beliefs depends itself on social factors. "What Kuhn still doubts is only whether progress in puzzle-solving, or rather problem-solving, ability constitutes 'progress towards the truth'... Thus Kuhn sharply separates the empirical success of a theory from the verisimilitude or 'truth-likeness' of its ontology."<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2. An obsession with triads

Despite Kuhn's own scepticism, his approach was applied to social sciences. Part of the literature focused on the first concept of paradigm as "normal science" as a legitimated and dominating theoretical source for puzzle solving.<sup>11</sup> Others questioned the validity of Kuhn's "revolution" and preferred Lakatos' more cumulative (albeit also not teleological)

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Mastermann, "The Nature of a Paradigm", in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it would be incorrect to say that theory development is necessarily "real-world following". For this latter argument, see K.J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which are the Fairest Theories of All?", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3 (September 1989), p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Reinhard Meyers, "Wie viele Schwalben machen einen Sommer? (Re-)Naissance der Internationalen Politischen Ökonomie?", *Neue Politische Literatur*, vol. 34, n. 1 (1989), p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Alan E. Musgrave, "Kuhn's Second Thoughts", in Gary Gutting (ed.), *Paradigms and Revolutions. Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, R.W. Mansbach and J. A. Vasquez, *In Search for Theory. A New Paradigm for Global Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); and John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: A Critique* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983).

view of scientific progress as superseding research programmes.<sup>12</sup> Finally, a group of scholars discussed the notion of incommensurability and the “Inter-Paradigm Debate”. These latter have produced the by now widely used textbook triads of IR theories.

K.J.Holsti sees three “sufficient, and probably necessary, criteria to distinguish between genuine paradigms in our field”<sup>13</sup> (See Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1.** Holsti’s *Divided Discipline*.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Paradigms</i>	Classical Tradition	Global Society	Neo-marxism
(1) causes of war and conditions of peace/society/order; “an essential subsidiary problem is the nature of power”		= central problematic	conditions for global community	inequality/exploitation
(2) the essential actors and/or units of analysis		diplomatic-military behaviour of states	web of transborder interactions	class/social groups
(3) images of the world/system/society of states		anarchy	world society in a global economy	core - periphery

This threefold view of IR/IPE is, however, not limited to Realists. Michael Banks, disciple of John Burton’s “World Society” approach, establishes a similar triptych (See Table 2.2). He gives different names and includes regime analysis out of the interdependence tradition within the “Global Society” which he calls “pluralism”.<sup>14</sup>

Out of this apparent irreducibility of values, Holsti and Banks derive far-reaching conclusions about the possible evolution of IR. The search for a sole paradigm in IR is vain.

<sup>12</sup> Robert O. Keohane (1983) “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond”, in his edited *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 158-203; and Marc Blaug, “Kuhn versus Lakatos, or paradigms versus research programmes in the history of economics”, *History of Political Economy*, vol. 7 (1975), pp. 399-433. For a more Kuhnian vision of the discipline of economics, see Bert Hamminga, *Neoclassical Theory Structure and Theory Development. An Empirical-Philosophical Case-Study Concerning the Theory of International Trade* (Berlin, New York et al.: Springer-Verlag, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> K.J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline. Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 11. The reversal of criteria (1) with the answer given by the classical paradigm is a Freudian slip of the Classical Realist Holsti himself. See pp. 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Banks, “The Inter-Paradigm Debate”, in A.J.R. Groom and Margot Light (eds), *International Relations. A Handbook of Current Theory* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), pp. 7-26.

**Table 2.2.** Michael Banks' three paradigms.

<i>Paradigms Criteria</i>	Realism	Pluralism	Structuralism
Basic image	“Billiard-ball”	“cobweb”	“multi-headed octopus”
Actors	states	states & others	classes
Dynamics	force	complex social movements	economics
Dependent variables	explain what states do	explain all major world events	explain inequality and poverty
Scope of the study of IR	interstate relations	relations between all actors & market & nationalism	IR = surface phenomena of the totality of social relations and modes of production

There can be no debate and appraisal of validity across, but only within paradigms.<sup>15</sup> Holsti uses the argument to criticise attempts to synthesise Marxism and Realism. Banks aims at “Realism-plus-grafted-on-components”.<sup>16</sup> By this, he means a kind of “hoovering-effect”, in which Realism swallows everything valuable stemming from other paradigms.

In this context, the Kuhnian concept of paradigm in its sense of *Weltanschauung* has very appealing implications. Kuhn argues that paradigms have a logic of their own; they are incommensurable. One paradigm cannot judge the other. To prefer one paradigm instead of another cannot be rationalised by any non-circular argument.<sup>17</sup> If this concept were right, it would provide a suitable protective belt for any school of thought. “Don’t criticise me, we speak different languages.” Some scholars in IR have surrendered to this marvellous invitation and hopelessly trivialised Kuhn’s important insights. Holsti conceptualises paradigms with a criterion for “images of the world”. Yet he is sincere enough to admit in a footnote that

There are numerous definitions of paradigms, but for our purpose the notion of their function is most important. They are basically selecting devices which imposes some...

<sup>15</sup> See also R.D. McKinlay and Richard Little, *Global Problems and World Order* (Maddison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 266-73.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Banks, “The evolution of international relations”, in Michael Banks (ed.), *Conflict in World Society. A new perspective on international relations* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Barry Barnes, *T.S. Kuhn and social science* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 65.

coherence on an infinite universe of facts and data which, by themselves, have no meaning... I realize that this use of the term paradigm is somewhat narrower than the meaning developed by Thomas Kuhn... To him, paradigms are rooted not just in rationally analyzable differences, but in trans-rational perceptions, or *gestalts*.<sup>18</sup>

One does not need, therefore, to show that the paradigms as presented here are indeed incommensurable. Holsti cannot use this concept for opposing syntheses, because he explicitly excludes the only meaning of incommensurability, based on a holistic theory of meaning, which would serve the purpose. Therefore he has to introduce values instead of “*gestalts*” to contend that synthesis of paradigms is impossible. Finally, he asks about the *desirability* “of a synthesis between world views which have diametrically opposed normative claims and ideals.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, whereas Banks had argued for the Inter-Paradigm-Debate to open up the field of International Relations for marginalised approaches, Holsti seems committed to closing off his favoured approach from any attacks on its assumptions.<sup>20</sup>

Even the newer discipline IPE has not been spared by these triads, generally subsumed as the “economic” theories under the three paradigms: nationalism (mercantilism), liberalism, Marxism (dependency).<sup>21</sup> Robert Gilpin’s initial definition of IPE in the 1970s, was derived from the level of the agent as the simultaneous pursuit of power and wealth. Yet, driven by his own definition, he came to conclude in 1987 that because of its exclusion of power concerns “liberalism lacks a true political economy.”<sup>22</sup> He then saved a liberal account by redefining IPE as the interplay of a global market (the liberal ideal type) and its political organisation. This corresponds to the more typical self-description of IPE in the 1980s, namely the (international) State-Market Nexus.<sup>23</sup> Hence liberalism can be saved because, although it still lacks a political economy, it is at least a necessary ingredient for the understanding of markets. The reason for this change lies in the generalised perception that there are three incompatible value-systems. To conceptualise different schools with the overriding concern of distinguishing three normative positions leads to conceptual difficulties in making them fit. Consequently Gilpin, honestly

<sup>18</sup> *The Dividing Discipline*, p. 14, fn. 6. This use of paradigm is interchangeable with the traditional use of “theory” in IR. If Holsti makes a typology of theories, the number of three appears rather arbitrary.

<sup>19</sup> *The Dividing Discipline*, pp. 132, 77.

<sup>20</sup> For another way to use “incommensurability” as a closing procedure, see Stephen D. Krasner, “Toward Understanding in International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1985), pp. 137-144.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Robert Gilpin, “Three Models of the Future”, *International Organization*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Winter 1975), pp. 37-60 and (with Jean M. Gilpin), *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chapter 2; Nazli Choucri, “International Political Economy: A Theoretical Perspective”, in A. George, O. Holsti, R. Siverson (eds), *Change in the International System* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 103-129; J.R. Barry Jones, “International Political Economy: Problems and Issues. Part I”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 7 (1982), pp. 245-260; Stephen Gill and David Law, *The Global Political Economy* (New York et al.: Harvester Wheatsheaf Press, 1988), Part I.

<sup>22</sup> *The Political Economy of International Relations*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> This redefinition splits up what should be united in IPE, politics and economics.

admitting his own ambivalences, defines himself as a liberal in a Realist world or a Marxist world of class struggle.<sup>24</sup>

The cohesion of our triptychs relies then upon a rationalisation of three main political ideologies, as they “naturally” appear to the Anglo-American core of IR: conservatism, liberalism (in its US sense) and radicalism. This also explains the heterogeneity in particular of the middle category, where Banks, for instance, mixed Beitz, Keohane & Nye with his own World Society paradigm. In one or the other definition, all can be considered “liberals”.<sup>25</sup> Hence, values-incompatibility becomes the taken-for-granted background for theoretical debate. There is no argument why specific normative concerns are automatically tied to specific schools of explanation. It is assumed, but not shown *why particular variables, methodologies, and epistemological assumptions are inherently and exclusively tied to one value-system*. Hence, there is no *a priori* reason to infer from value incompatibility a case for paradigm incommensurability, even though the latter might well exist on the epistemological level.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, it seems preferable to understand the three competing schools as an indication of the fragmentation of international studies in the specific period of the 1970s and 1980s, where Realism has lost its hegemony. In other words, the IPD is not the last word that can forever guide our understanding, but it corresponds to *a historical stage* of the discourse in International Relations. Confronted with fragmentation, value-distinctions are used to legitimate established research programmes. By the same token, the IPD sheds the more fundamental challenge to the empiricist stronghold in IR/IPE. The metatheoretical debate has been reduced from the construction of knowledge via *Weltanschauung* to the well-known value-fact distinction of empiricist research.<sup>27</sup> A predefined theoretical pluralism allowed academic business-as-usual. The IPD started by protecting challengers of Realism from being swept away. Over time it became a welcome barrier against any criticism and a good legitimization for academic routine. A policy of academic spheres of influence became wrapped up in a somewhat scientific Kuhnian blanket.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “The Richness of the Realist Tradition”, in R. Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p. 304. Also Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye repeatedly stress that “liberalism and realism are not two incommensurable paradigms” (“*Power and Interdependence Revisited*,” *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987), p. 728 f.) and Keohane joins Gilpin by saying that if the liberal position is defined by values, such as the priority given to freedom, he does not see why one cannot be in this sense liberal and academically a Realist. See *International Institutions and State Power. Essay in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the liberal or middle-way paradigm remains the one which eludes any clear-cut definition. For a similar critique of the Grotian (as opposed to the Hobbesian and Kantian) tradition, see R.B.J. Walker, *Ethics, Modernity and the Theory of International Relations* (Paper presented at the Center for International Studies, Princeton University, 1988/89), mimeo, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> For similar thoughts, see Mark Neufeld, “Reflexivity and International Relations Theory”, *Millennium*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 53-76.

<sup>27</sup> For a similar argument, see in particular Jim George, “Of Incarceration and Closure: Neo-Realism and the New/Old World Order”, *Millennium*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 202ff.

<sup>28</sup> For the same critique, see Friedrich Kratochwil, “The embarrassment of changes: neo-realism and the

The discipline started to argue about its foundations when its paradigm was in a crisis. This allowed research at the fringes of the established canon.<sup>29</sup> Threatened in its identity, the discipline welcomed any barriers to legitimate an independent status. Getting rid of value-derived triads, one can rescue the issues on the contested *boundaries of the discipline* which the IPD only temporarily fixed.

## 2. Searching borders

Kuhn states that a paradigm governs, in the first instance, not a subject-matter, but a group of practitioners. Any research on paradigms should try to locate the scientific group.<sup>30</sup> During the Cold War, Realist debates became the self-definition of the discipline.<sup>31</sup> Realism as a disciplinary paradigm should be understood as an interaction of its practitioners with their environment after the demise of (so-called) idealist appeasement. There is a sense in which Cold War, Realism, and IR as a US social science coincide.<sup>32</sup>

This was undermined by several developments. The organisation of welfare states in an order of “embedded liberalism”<sup>33</sup> considerably widened the scope of state politics; indeed, it redefined classical Realist “high politics”. At the same time, the specific US political environment of superpower détente after Cuba and the US war in Vietnam undermined Realism’s grip on the practitioners. Henry Kissinger’s linkage-update of the Concert of Europe could not succeed in its ambition of comprehensive great power management, because modern states can control neither domestic politics, foreign allies, nor finally the transnational politics of non-state actors, in such a way as to assure its

science of Realpolitik without politics”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1993), p. 68. Since the IPD assured some pluralism, some commentators criticise the attempts to get to a “next stage” of IR theory. See Yosef Lapid, “*Quo Vadis* International Relations? Further Reflections on the ‘Next Stage’ of International Theory”, *Millennium*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1989), pp. 82-84. The argument is partly right, because these critiques generally ask for a more self-reflexive discipline. The present pluralism as a form of “academic spheres of influence” is, however, not necessarily conducive to such reflection.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 180.

<sup>31</sup> “Realist debates” refers to the debates spurred by the Realist paradigm. Hence, the Realist-idealist debate is part and parcel of the Realist agenda. Indeed, Realism derives its initial legitimation and credibility exactly from this (self-constructed) antagonism.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, “An American Social Science: International Relations”, *Dædalus*, vol. 106, no. 3 (1977), pp. 41-60; Roger Tooze, “International Political Economy”, in Steve Smith (ed.), *International Relations. British and American Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 108-125; Steve Smith, “Paradigm Dominance in IR: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science”, *Millennium*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1987), pp. 189-206.

<sup>33</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order”, *International Organization*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 379-415. See also his more recent discussion, “Embedded Liberalism Revisited: Institutions and Progress in International Economic Relations”, in Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford (eds), *Progress in Postwar International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 202-234.

implementation.<sup>34</sup> Even though linkage policies try consciously to integrate economic affairs into security policies, these very linkages have already developed outside the centralised control of the state or state-system. Détente is simultaneously the perfection of superpower-diplomacy in the 20th Century and the symbol for its decline.

The decline of the Realist paradigm, both in the drawing of the agenda and the self-justification of the discipline's members, has resulted in (and is a result of) an expanding research agenda of IR. The discipline, confronted with an encompassing *global net*, has tried different closures which are necessary for a more focused research. This happened at the level of the subject matter, and more recently at its metatheoretical foundations. It is at this level where incommensurability might possibly apply and the present debate can be more satisfactorily framed.

### 2.1. The global net

The behavioral revolution, even though often within the Realist paradigm, has undermined one crucial paradigmatic function: by presupposing a common methodology for domestic and foreign policy research, it justified the intrusion of sociological concepts, approaches and standards into the discourse of IR. In other words, it destroyed the internal/external distinction upon which the Realist paradigm relies.<sup>35</sup> It de-legitimated the paradigm's claim that the international realm is qualitatively different from domestic social systems and therefore requires different research (and a different discipline).

The transnationalist research programme started off with questions concerning the effects of transnationalisation on democratic control in welfare and developing states. It problematised the mismatch between the transnationalisation of politics which were still controlled and legitimated by national constituencies.<sup>36</sup> During the 1970s, the initial impulse to explore this mismatch has been increasingly forgotten. Keohane and Nye summarised the resulting research programme for the 1970s, when they asked for a synthesis of inter-governmental relations with bureaucratic politics and transnational approaches.<sup>37</sup> Hence, IR includes the state-society link only at the level of the decision-making system.

As a shorthand, one could present this stage as a *global net* (See Figure 2.1. The Eastonian input-output model is chosen deliberately to acknowledge the impact of more behavioural domestic political science on IR). The debate in IR can be understood as different attempts to either broaden or restrict this picture.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, *Primacy or World Order. American Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978), chapter 2; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapter 10.

<sup>35</sup> R.B.J. Walker argues in *Political Theory and the Transformation of World Politics* (Princeton. World Orders Study Program. Occasional Papers No. 8), pp. 14-15, that the two great debates arrived where two challengers (universalist idealism and general behavioralism) challenged the specificity of IR.

<sup>36</sup> See Karl Kaiser, "Transnationale Politik. Zu einer Theorie der multinationalen Politik", in Ernst-Otto Czempiel (ed.), *Die anachronistische Souveränität* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969), pp. 80-109.

<sup>37</sup> *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 380.

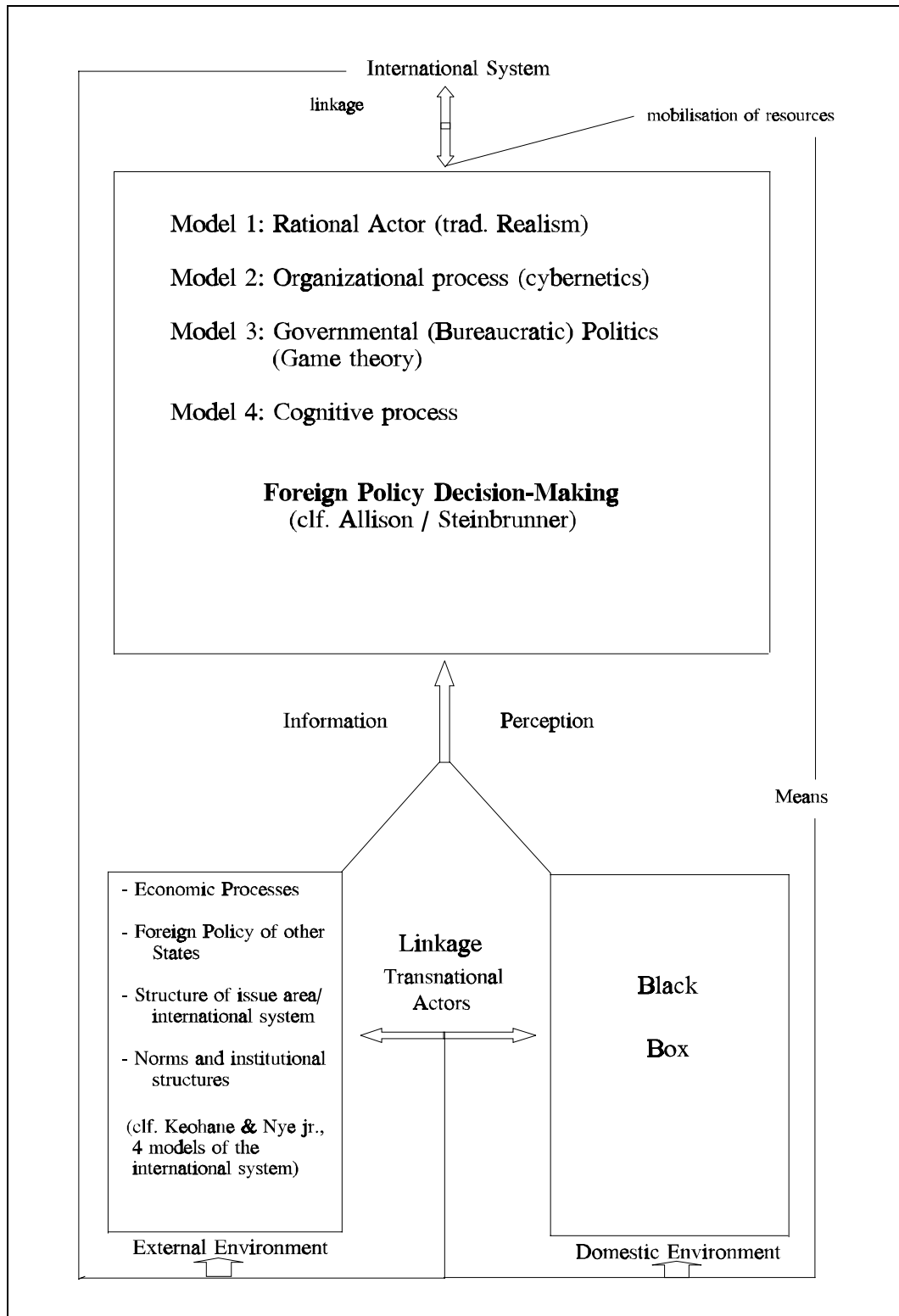


Figure 2.1. The global net.



## 2.2. Closure and Opening of the subject-matter

Systemic Realism provides a “parsimonious” restriction of this wide net. First, it dumps every non-structural variance to the domestic level<sup>38</sup>, reserving an independent domain for the discipline of IR. Second, it reduces the explanatory range of IR theory. It cannot explain everything, but just some important fundamentals. And since systemic Realism provided these basics, future theorisation cannot be but epicycles around this theory.

The still loose concept of IPE attracted many challengers who tried to overcome this reduction of their activity. From the outset, IPE included economic dynamics into international analysis, and not just as a contextual factor. Closure occurred quickly, however. Hegemonic Stability Theory is by now not very much else than an approach to study the effect of changing power relations on the provision of a public good.<sup>39</sup> True, the list grows with items to be included into the assessment of the Balance of Power, and of spheres that are subject to its ruling. Neorealist versions of regime analysis split up an international system into issue-areas which concerns states and non-state actors alike.<sup>40</sup> Thus, part of IPE, which Susan Strange castigates as “Politics of International Economic Relations” has been coopted into the mainstream research programme.<sup>41</sup> For the rest, IR immunises itself by declaring IPE another discipline.

## 2.3. The meta-theoretical debate

The restriction of IR’s outskirts has been coupled with an attempt to discipline methodology and epistemology. Waltz has reimported the economic approach with its specific link of rational choice theory and market theory. These two levels of analysis are inextricably linked. The market structure must be taken for granted for the rational choice approach to work. The utilitarian drive of the units must be assumed for the market logic to follow. Although particular analyses, like Waltz’s for instance, can opt to analyze from the structural level, the economic approach in its IR version has as its basic ontology states, and as underlying dynamics, national power(s). Accordingly, Neorealism can be criticised both on the assumptions and restrictions of its micro- and macro-theory.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye jr., “*Power and Interdependence Revisited*,” p. 746.

<sup>39</sup> For this stress on the public good argument as the core of HST, see Duncan Snidal, “The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory”, *International Organization*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1985), pp. 579-614.

<sup>40</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony. Cooperation and Conflict in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> See for instance in *States and Markets. An Introduction of International Political Economy* (London et al.: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 12-13.

<sup>42</sup> This is Richard Ashley’s and Alexander Wendt’s position in their debate with Martin Hollis and Steve Smith. See Richard Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism”, in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, pp. 158-203; Alexander Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations,” *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 337-370; Alexander Wendt, “Bridging the Theory/Meta-Theory Gap in International Theory”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (October 1991), pp. 383-392; Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, “Beware of gurus: structure and action in international relations”, same issue, pp. 393-410. See also the rejoinders: Alexander Wendt, “Level of Analysis vs. Agents and Structures:

The attacks have been substantially most damaging here, even though this is easily swept aside with our favourite reply that the debate is about irresolvable value-assumptions. This is all the more astonishing, because those interventions that were most widely held to be representative of the debate pointed extensively to a wider epistemological realm — and not to values.<sup>43</sup>

Regimes and game-theoretical rational choice approaches that underlie new institutionalism are attacked for their *methodological individualism*. Kratochwil and Ruggie argue, that even accepting the possibility of such an approach, regime theory entails a clash between its individualist methodology and its intersubjective ontology.<sup>44</sup> This charge has never been answered in the literature. Ashley and Wendt have shown the weaknesses of the market-international affairs analogy of microeconomic approaches that leave out ways to study the emergence of states and of their power, i.e. the constitution of the realm we take for granted as international. Change is the black box of such an approach. By taking unified actors as given, rational choice approaches weaken the apprehension of their historicity and their domestic dimension and actually undermine the transnational insights with which the regime programme started off.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, scientism has been widely attacked, but not in a defence of the established research programme, as during the Second Debate. The “Post-Positivist” Debate touches the meta-theoretical level where the power/knowledge link is concealed.<sup>46</sup>

#### 2.4. International Theory at the beginning of the 1990s

##### *Mapping IR theories*

The dynamics of the present debates cannot be retraced by the IPD. By crossing the two major organising principles of today’s metatheoretical debate (naturalism versus interpretivism and individualism versus holism), a map of today’s approaches can be

Part III”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (April 1992), pp. 181-85; Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, “Structure and Action: Further Comment”, same issue, pp. 187-88.

<sup>43</sup> Hayward Alker & Thomas Biersteker, “Notes for a Future Archaeologist of International Savoir Faire,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1984), pp. 121-142; Friedrich Kratochwil & John Gerard Ruggie, “International Organization: a State of the Art on the Art of the State,” *International Organization*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Autumn 1986), pp. 753-775.

<sup>44</sup> “International Organization: A State of the Art on the Art of the State.”

<sup>45</sup> Richard Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism” and Alexander Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations”; For the last point, see Hayward Alker, “The Presumption of Anarchy in World Politics,” in H. Alker & R. Ashley, *After Neorealism: Anarchy, Power and International Collaboration* (quotable draft from 1986, forthcoming), p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> For a good presentation, see Yosef Lapid, “The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33 (1989), pp. 235-254. These positions will be introduced in Part III. See also Mark Hoffman, “Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory”, *Millennium*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 169-185, provides a succinct and thoughtful comparison.

established that clarifies those links at which theories engage in contests and rapprochements (See Table 2.3). Let me introduce the categories of the typology.<sup>47</sup>

Naturalism refers to the positivist epistemology which implies:

- methodological monism, i.e. the idea of the unity of scientific method amidst the diversity of subject matter of scientific investigation;
- mathematical ideals of perfection, i.e. the idea that mathematics and physics set the standard of the development of a science, including the humanities. This entails the search for universal or general laws as the specific research program;
- a subsumption-theoretic view of scientific explanation, i.e. the explanatory methodology whereby from covering (generally causal) laws hypothesis are deduced and particular cases subsumed and thereby explained;
- falsification as the scientific demarcation criterion, i.e. what separates science from other undertakings and scientific theory from ideology.<sup>48</sup>

Interpretive approaches towards science oppose these fundamental tenets of positivism. The starting point of the hermeneutical approach is the idea that whereas in the natural sciences the researchers and their object are independent, humanities have to deal with an internal individual or intersubjective relation. Human beings cannot be subsumed under the category of unanimated or unconscious “objects”. The validity of a hypothesis cannot be “tested” against an independent outside world. This would presuppose a direct access to an external (that is mind-independent) world. Falsification in the sense of a test with the real world is, therefore, not a possible demarcation criterion for human sciences. The validity can only be assessed by the intersubjectively shared conventional criteria of the participants in a specific (here scientific) discourse. The scientific project consists therefore in making sense (within one’s intersubjectively shared meanings) of particular moments in history. Only ex post rationalisations are possible, generally no predictions.

On the methodological/ontological axis, individualism refers to the position that any explanation must, in the last instance, be reduced to individual action, although the outcome might not reflect individual intention. If the action is conceived as a automatism as in some behavioral psychological theories or in strong utilitarian approaches, then it falls in the top left corner. But there is also individualist action in the hermeneutical tradition, as for instance, in Weberian approaches where the always contingent meaning context of the individual action must be reconstructed. Thus, regime approaches fall as game theory

<sup>47</sup> See also Davide Sparti, *Se un leone potesse parlare. Indagini sul comprendere e spiegare* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1992). In IR, see Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); and Walter Carlsnaes, “The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 3 (September 1992), p. 249.

<sup>48</sup> See also Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 4.

Table 2.3 A mapping of theories in IR/IPE at the beginning of the 1990s.

	Individualism		Holism	
<b>Naturalism</b>	<b>Human Nature</b> 1. World Society (Burton) 2. Morgenthau (2nd edition)	<b>Rational Choice</b> Game Theory Strategies Economics of IR (Bruno Frey)	(Kaplan) <b>Systemic Realism</b> (Waltz)	(structural) functionalism
<b>Intepretivism</b>	3. Morgenthau (1st edition), Niebuhr	<b>Foreign Policy Analysis</b> 1. Bureaucratic Politics 2. <i>Operational Code</i> (George) 3. Cognitive Map	<b>Institutionalism</b>	<b>World System Analysis</b> (Chase-Dunn)
	<b>Normative theories</b> (Linklater, Beitz, Nardin)	<b>Comparative Political Economy</b> (Katzenstein) “Historical Sociology” (Aron) <b>English School of IR</b>	<b>Regime</b>	<b>Gramscian Analysis</b> (Cox) <b>Dependency</b> (Cardoso, Evans) <b>Critical Theory</b> (Kratochwil)
				<b>Constructivism</b> (Onuf, Wendt) <b>Post-Structuralism</b> (Walker, Ashley)

in the first and as Weberian approaches in the last category.<sup>49</sup> Holism must be distinguished from mere collective action by looking at the attribution of the underlying dynamic. Collective action, although not necessarily reflecting individual intentionality, is derived from it. A holistic approach sees the dynamic of the whole as self-perpetrating. If these are objective laws from which one can derive the functioning of its parts, as the classical marxist laws of capitalism, then it is part of naturalism. For hermeneutic holists, there can be no objectivised structures, but only intersubjective practices which for their reproduction must be enacted by individual action.

Some research programmes cut across the categories. Empiricism can be found in all except the intersubjective category. The same applies for the present Neorealism/Neo-institutionalism debate. In other words, to be anti-Realist does not necessarily imply leaving empiricism, as many so-called idealist or radical approaches prove. Feminist theories of IR can be located at the post-structuralist, liberal (close to normative) and materialist position.<sup>50</sup>

#### “Rationalism” versus “reflectivism”?

Do we conclude that the main divide in the theoretical debate is between (Mainstream) “Rationalism” and its challengers, the “reflectivists”? Although designed to open debate, Keohane’s now widely used dichotomy mobilises a bias of closure. It creates a residual category, the “reflectivists”, who, in turn, are found to lack an empirical research programme.<sup>51</sup>

First of all, this categorisation takes the empiricist epistemology for granted. Since there have been many misunderstandings of this point, it is worth recalling that it is not empirical research as such which makes the difference, but what is *meant* by it. The empiricist approach takes the “real world as it is” and tries to create either an intentional account or a causal construct between categories for its explanation. Non-empiricist approaches problematise the relation between categories and the object of study, where the conceptualisation of the research is not independent from its result. It does not assume an independent “real world” to be used as neutral testing ground. Theory is not prior to

<sup>49</sup> To avoid this typological problem, Mark Neufeld distinguishes between “strict” and “meaning-oriented behaviouralism” which he integrates into the positivist category, thereby reserving for interpretive theories only intersubjective meaning approaches. See his “Interpretation and the ‘Science’ of International Relations”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1993), in particular pp. 41-49.

<sup>50</sup> Anne Sisson Runyan and V. Spike Peterson, “The Radical Future of Realism: Feminist Subversions of IR Theory,” *Alternatives*, vol. 16 (1991), pp. 67-106.

<sup>51</sup> Robert O. Keohane (1987) “International Institutions: Two Approaches”, in his *State Power and International Institutions. Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 173. It is impressive to what extent this debate echoes the long standing Positivism-Debate in German sociology to which a post-structuralist twist has been added. See for instance, Wolfgang Abendroth, “International Relations, Völkerrecht und Außenpolitik als Teildisziplinen der politischen Wissenschaft - ein Disput mit Ernst-Otto Czempiel”, in Ekkehart Krippendorff (ed.), *Internationale Beziehungen* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1973), pp. 13-37.

nature as such. Yet when we cut out parts of this nature as “facts” or “events”, the selection relies on theory. This entails that empirical research cannot be done without prior clarification of its philosophical and meta-theoretical commitments.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, it also means that empirical research can have a meaning different from that empiricists assume. Those who have been most attacked for lacking an empirical research programme are post-structuralists. Their empirical referent are (in particular discursive) practices. Indeed, constructivists and post-structuralists have concentrated for a long time to study how theoretical discourses in IR have embedded the way we conceive and debate our field and activity. It is empirical to study what experts do. Keohane’s claim is hence either misleading or ironic. It is misleading, if the study of the way IR experts explain world events, which as such is also an event, is considered non-empirical.<sup>53</sup> It is ironic, if what experts do is considered insignificant and therefore empirically negligible, because this relevance is the very justification for many positivist studies.

### 3. Theoretical rapprochements as the context of new power concepts

The demise of the state-system as the main reference for conceiving “world politics” has left international theory in an unbalanced position. In the preceding section, some meta-theoretical borders have been drawn. This section develops some of the underlying themes of the emerging identity outside the Mainstream debate which takes place in the grey-shaded area.

The most fundamental insight seems to spring from a major historisation (and for some: genealogy) of the present international system in its different aspects: it emerged at the interface of the emergence of the modern state, the first real international polity, the first major market extension and the beginning of capitalism, and finally rationalism (Enlightenment) and democratic theory. Today’s theory is, in a nutshell, a critical reflection of, and for some a move beyond, modernity’s heritage in changing circumstances.

Two main dialogues on the ground of the hermeneutical tradition derive from it: one in social and political theory and one in historical sociology/political economy. The first is the meeting point of Critical theory with normative theory including in both feminist theories; the second is a historicist Realist and Dependency rapprochement within IPE. On the base of a constructivist epistemological analysis, the first reapprehends in particular the anarchy/sovereignty concept. Adding historical sociology, the second reconsiders the

<sup>52</sup> See also R.B.J. Walker’s response to Keohane in “History and Structure in the Theory of International Relations”, *Millennium*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1989), p. 178.

<sup>53</sup> It would come close to the well-established fallacy to conceive of the empirical world only as its material part. “[T]he paradigms which order ‘reality’ are part of the reality they order,... language is part of the social structure and not epiphenomenal to it, and... we are studying an aspect of reality when we study the ways in which it appeared real to the persons to whom it was more real than anyone else.” See J.G.A. Pocock, “Language and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought”, in his *Politics, Language and Time. Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 38.

state/society nexus. Both join in the reconceptualisation of power in the contemporary global political economy.

### 3.1. Political theory beyond the anarchy/sovereignty divide

Anarchy-sovereignty has been found to be the basic double concept of the Neorealist research programme, its deconstruction one of the challenging undertakings of the 1980s.

Several writers were sceptical of the anarchy concept as it appeared in Waltz. It allowed only for two state of affairs, one being hierarchy (as in domestic societies), the other being anarchy. Even though Realists are explicit that anarchy does not mean chaos, the internal/external distinction is paradigmatic.<sup>54</sup> Traditionally the anarchy-sovereignty distinction has been attacked for its crude representation of a Hobbesian state of war (which, in fact, takes Hobbes' domestic order before Leviathan as its reference point). The English School qualified it as an international (anarchical) *society*. Other try to refer to a wider concept of rule (*Herrschaft*).<sup>55</sup> The post-structuralist tradition aimed at showing the social construction of what international anarchy meant for world politics.

In a next step, the concept of *sovereignty* is analysed as a silencing practice that excludes from discourse understandings of identity that are outside the modern state. The idea of sovereignty has historically played a crucial role in bridging crucial rifts. Born at the beginning of the modern state-system it still offers both a spatial and temporal solution to reconcile universalism (as the aspirations of Medieval Christendom) and community particularism. This solution consists in the sharp distinction between on the one hand political life inside a community, where progress is possible, and on the other hand mere relations outside the territorial boundaries that are the realm of repetition and where "the present is destined to return."<sup>56</sup> This allows us to stop the potential common identity of mankind at the particularistic organisation in states.<sup>57</sup>

Here the debate meets recent normative theory. One of the main precepts of the Realist inter-state political approach is the application of the private/public distinction to the internal/external divide. Especially strong in the writings of Kissinger, this idea isolates the inter-state realm as a public and thus "political" space. Taking plurality for granted (both as an assumption of sovereignty-anarchy and as moral precept), the clash of incompatible or even incommensurable world views and policy aims can only be limited

<sup>54</sup> For a Realist-inspired critique of this poor concept of structure, see John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, pp. 131-157, which is taken up as a major inspiration for a reformulation of Neorealism that develops the second tier of Waltz's approach in Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Onuf & Frank Klink, "Anarchy, Authority, Rule", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33 (1989), pp. 149-173.

<sup>56</sup> R.B.J. Walker, "State Sovereignty and the Articulation of Political Space/Time," *Millennium*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Autumn 1991), pp. 458-59.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

by confining them to a private, i.e. “domestic” sphere.<sup>58</sup> The “privatisation” of international politics, understood as an attempt to export the national, private conception of politics, would involve the extinction of plurality and render diplomacy impossible. Indeed, the attempt to think politics globally is considered most destabilising.<sup>59</sup>

Recent democratic theory has more explicitly focused on the loosening references to territories and communities, or in other words, the transnational networks and actors that undermine the state capacity to control the international private-public divide.<sup>60</sup> Major decision of a national polity elude national decision bodies and, in turn, major actions here can affect, even non-intentionally, state-society relations elsewhere. By the same token, globalisation, with its temporal integration, challenges political theory whose universalist aspirations often stop arbitrarily at national borders, but that, as well, provides with its impetus on rights (human rights including possibly also ecology and development) one of the new major driving forces in international affairs.<sup>61</sup>

These issues expand the realm of world politics. This is the context for new definitions of power. Once anarchy is not something naturally given, its meaning for world politics is contested. Diplomatic (and other) practices fill this anarchical void. Post-structuralism perceives power phenomena in this diplomatic construction of power politics. Furthermore, Waltz’ positivistic turn has been criticised as a power practice itself, because its epistemology effects a restriction of the agenda of question that can be reasonably asked.

### 3.2. Historicised IPE around the state-society nexus

Other, for the IPD unexpected, rapprochements in the hermeneutical tradition concern IR’s “historical sociologists” (Aron, Hoffmann, Rosecrance), the English School, and writers stemming originally from Marxist backgrounds.<sup>62</sup> These Realist writers have also attract-

<sup>58</sup> This idea is particularly well developed in Henry A. Kissinger (1957) *A World Restored. The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Era* (London: Victor Gallantz, 1977).

<sup>59</sup> This is called “nationalist universalism” by Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

<sup>60</sup> David Held, “Democracy, the Nation-State, and the Global System”, *Economy and Society*, vol. 20, no. 2 (May 1991), pp. 138-172.

<sup>61</sup> Bull himself seemed to have come closer to a position where the individual is not only object, but also subject of international affairs. Topics like humanitarian intervention emerge as legitimate on the agenda. See R.J. Vincent, “Order in International Politics”, in J.D.B. Miller and R.J. Vincent (eds), *Order and Violence. Hedley Bull and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 38-64. For a recent attempt to deconstruct the traditional normative debate, see in particular Heikki Patomäki, “From Normative Utopias to Political Dialectics: Beyond a Deconstruction of the Brown-Hoffman Debate”, *Millennium*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 53-75.

<sup>62</sup> See for instance Fred Halliday’s interest in Richard Rosecrance’s *Action and Reaction in World Politics. International Systems in Perspective* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963/77 2nd ed.) in ““The Sixth Great Power’: on the Study of Revolutions and International Relations,” *Review of International Studies*, vol. 16, (1990), pp. 169-185.



ed the defense of scholars from Critical Theory for their historical sensitivity.<sup>63</sup> The impact of comparative historical sociology on IR in the 1980s opens up a debate largely on Weberian grounds where Classical Realism can meet dependency approaches.

The theoretical context in which this rapprochement takes place is the reconceptualisation of the state or state-society relations in the global political economy.<sup>64</sup> Once the basic anarchy/sovereignty divide is attacked, state-society relations are no longer the implicit foundations of an international society of states, but the very ground on which international relations take place. International relations are not “above” societal relations, but the transborder processes that both stem from and embrace them. Indeed, increasingly there is a reference to the “internationalisation” of both the state and society which tries to overcome the sole spatial division on which these two concepts have been based.

It is probably not fortuitous that writers in IPE have been particularly sensitive to these issues. The never-neutral working of the increasingly global market makes a view that encompasses particular state(-society)-market articulations all the more compelling. Traditionally, Realists were not over-willing to do so. Yet, more recently, in an attempt to include domestic politics into the overall analysis, a small theory of the state has been presented. It remains a static view of the domestic environment: a *weak/strong* state distinction as one explanatory variable for policy action or economic development.<sup>65</sup> This takes for granted what should be explained: in the absence of an autarchic state development in world politics today, why is it that some states come to be weak? States have to be apprehended in the historical and societal setting as something more than a top-down machinery for the mobilisation of foreign policy tools.<sup>66</sup>

Other research programmes in this rapprochement can be mentioned in passing. There is “comparative political economy” that takes macro-sociological categories out of the corporatism and welfare regime literature and analyses the adaptation processes of state-

<sup>63</sup> So does Robert Cox, for instance, often refer to Carr. This is where one could put Ashley in his Habermas inspired phase. (For a discussion of Ashley, see Ole Wæver, *Tradition and Transgression in International Relations: A Post-Ashleyan Position* (Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research. Working Paper 24/1989) and explicitly also R.B.J. Walker with his re-apprehension of more historicist Realists and for the closeness between ‘Neo-Weberian Realists’ and Critical Theory. See his “Realism, Change, and International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1987), pp. 65-86 (71f.); and “Ethics, Modernity and the Theory of International Relations,” p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of more societal theories in IR/IPE, see Ronen Palan, “The Second Structuralist Theories of International Relations: A Research Note,” *International Studies Notes*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1992), pp. 22-29.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Structural Conflict. The Third World Against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1985); M. Mastanduno, D.A. Lake and G.J. Ikenberry, “Toward a Realist Theory of State Action”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33 (1989), pp. 457-474.

<sup>66</sup> This refers to the entire dependency literature of the 1970s and 1980s. See for instance Peter Evans, *Dependent Development. The Alliance of Multinational, State and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); and “Foreign Capital and Third World State,” in S. Huntington and M. Wyner (eds), *Understanding Political Development* (Boston, Toronto, 1987), pp. 319-352. See also the literature on “bureaucratic authoritarianism” in Latin America which analyses the interplay between specific stages of capitalist development and political regimes. See David Collier (ed.), *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

society complexes within the global political economy.<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein, but deriving from Neomarxist approaches are the Gramscian School in IR and the Regulation School that both try to research the articulation of political regimes in a specific phase of capitalist development.<sup>68</sup> Finally, the study of *revolutions* as a specific interface of the internal/external articulation, has taken an international turn.<sup>69</sup> Weberian conceptualisations of the state open up the study of IR for more enriching questions that problematise the origins and dynamics of statehood (and state-building) in the international political economy.<sup>70</sup>

This IPE research programme redefines (international) political issues by means of including societal processes and market structures. Consequently, power could be conceived to refer to structural processes. In Part III, we will see how concepts of structural power refer to positional or non-intentional power when conceived from this research programme and to the knowledge/power link when derived from the previous one.

#### 4. Power Analysis: increased agency potential and diffusion of rule

Concepts like anarchy, international society, regimes, world capitalism, ecology are all indices of an “international” that increasingly expands the potential fields of political action, and yet reflect the impression, especially in the US and thus in IR, of a diminished agent (=state) impact on world affairs.

New conceptualisations of power arise in particular within and between these two new research fields of the interpretive tradition. In a sense, power is a common focus of all these approaches and therefore possibly a privileged access to a renewed international theory. Power held a central explanatory place both in Realist and Neorealist theory. After all, since anarchy does not change, it is the shifting balance and configuration of power that makes the analysis dynamic. Furthermore, it qualifies the anarchic international power structure, as uni-, bi-, or multipolar. The aggregation of national powers explain specific forms of rule under anarchy. As long as the basic logic of anarchy/sovereignty and the fundamental state-based agency stays unchallenged, this works. Once both are contested, international theory must start again to account for the locus of agency in international affairs, and the exact link between actor’s capabilities (power) and international rule.

<sup>67</sup> For some recent works, see W. Rand Smith, “International Economy and State Strategies. Recent Work in Comparative Political Economy”, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 25, no. 3 (April 1993), pp. 351-372.

<sup>68</sup> For the first, see Stephen Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); for the second, see Bob Jessop’s work, as for instance, “Regulation theories in retrospect and prospect”, *Economy and Society*, vol. 19 (1990), pp. 153-216. In IR, see Marie-Claude Smouts, “Some thoughts on international organizations and theories of regulation”, *International Social Science Journal*, (vol. XLV, no. 4), no. 138 (November 1993), pp. 443-451.

<sup>69</sup> Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974).

<sup>70</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1: A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Fred Halliday (1987), “State and society in international relations”, in Michael Banks & Martin Shaw (eds), *State and Society in International Relations* (New York, London *et al.*: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 191-209.

## 3

### Understanding the concept of power



This chapter prepares the ground for understanding why at this particular stage of world affairs (both in academic and diplomatic practice), power conceptualisations may appear especially appealing. In a context of both a potential rise in state control and actual impression of power diffusion, the very content of “politics” is openly contested. Arguing for new concepts of power implies a redefinition of what counts as a political issue. This chapter will introduce the assumptions on which the present conceptual analysis of power has been conducted.

#### 1. Assumptions of a conceptual analysis

The difficulty with “power” is that there is no consensus about how to study the concept, not to speak of its meaning. There are two main schools in this regard. On the one hand, a more philosophical approach aims at the determination of the meaning or meanings of “power.” On the other hand, there is a more sociological approach which asks more about the effects and the reasons for which such a concept is used. The one is concerned with what it *means*, the other with what it *does*. The two approaches can be combined, but this is not necessarily so. Let us start with the more philosophical approach.

Communication works smoothly as long as the meaning of a term is taken for granted. This presupposes that there is for every point in time a relatively stable meaning of the term. Conceptual analysis sets in when this understanding seems to produce misunderstandings. At this point, it tries to clarify the different meanings of a concept or groups of concepts. Sometimes, the analysis aims at fixing the meaning. One way consists in referring to a supposed essential meaning of the concept. This essentialist approach has been widely disregarded today. Less ambitiously, some writers try to reconstruct a descriptive meaning of the concept(s) to avoid incoherencies in its usage and misunderstandings. This reconstruction is meant to make the concepts useable for philoso-

phical discourse.<sup>1</sup> It aims at a possibly neutral reconstruction that can be used in different explanatory theories. The result is often a series of taxonomic definitions.

A slightly different tack consists in presupposing a common core of the different usages of the concept, without necessarily implying full-fledged taxonomic definitions and without implying a necessarily neutral one, either. Steven Lukes uses therefore a distinction taken from John Rawls, between a concept and its different conceptions.

What I propose to do instead is to offer a formal and abstract account of the *concepts* of power and authority respectively which inhere within the many *conceptions* of power and authority that have been used by particular thinkers within specific contexts, in development from and in reaction to one another. Any given conception of power and of authority (and of the relation between them) can be seen as an interpretation and application of its concept.<sup>2</sup>

A term like “anarchy”, for instance, might mean in one context the “law of the jungle”, in another “rule without government”, in another still “social organisation without hierarchy”. Yet, to be able to refer to all as interpretation of anarchy presupposes a common core. Otherwise, communication would not work. This core can be apprehended also by making an analysis of meaning clusters. Assuming power to be a *cluster concept*, the meaning of power is always to be assessed with its link to related concepts. Thus, any analysis of power must locate the meaning within a net (or cluster) of related concepts.<sup>3</sup> Also avoiding taxonomic approaches, Debnam proposes instead to define power through a cluster of references or properties, none of which is in a strict sense essential, but whose lack would seriously impair communication.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, there is a more conventionalist position where the meaning does not refer to an abstract semantic positioning, or a formal definition, but is derived from the context. This could refer to specific meaning contexts, as for instance academic disciplines, or the wider shared system of meaning that underlies communication, the *Lebenswelt* of the German hermeneutical tradition. Indeed, the variety of actual meanings of a concept is at any time the sum of the meanings in those contexts it is used. Or, what means more or less the same: there are a variety of concepts to which a particular word refers, that need not to have any overlapping meaning. Conceptual analysis can therefore never be done outside particular contexts.

This approach is often linked to a more sociological analysis of concepts. Here, the question is not so much what exactly is meant by it, but what the concept achieves in

<sup>1</sup> The best example of this approach is Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Steven Lukes, “Power and Authority”, in T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet (eds), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 634, original emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> For an argument in favour of seeing power as a cluster concept, see William E. Connelly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1974), p. 14. In IR, see John C. Garnett, *Common-sense and the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 113-117.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Debnam, *The Analysis of Power. A Realist Approach* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 4.

communication, especially if the meaning is taken for granted. To give an example with regard to power in IR. To use an argument evoking power or its distribution among actors, has often the effect to *close* a debate. “The USSR had no other choice in the 1980s. They could not compete with the overwhelming US power.” Power arguments are crucial in IR debates because the fundamental importance of power is so enshrined in our thinking that an appeal to them can resolve a dispute.

The position taken here follows a mixture of the approaches just mentioned. I think it is useful in scientific discourse to clarify particular meanings of concepts. Power is a concept that many writers have found important for the elaboration of explanations. It is considered an explanatory concept. If power repeatedly appears in explanations, it makes sense to clearly identify its meanings and properties. But concomitantly, I will argue later in this chapter that the significant meanings cannot be assessed without taking into account the meta-theoretical and theoretical context in which concepts are used. This implies that I do not think that we will find a neutral definition of a concept across contexts.

The present conceptual analysis is, hence, interested in the *use and meanings of power for explanations in IR/IPE*. This is a very specific context and does not necessarily entail much for other contexts (although I think that it does so for social sciences’ academic discourses, more generally). Within this historical and theoretical context, one can assume a certain stability of meanings for the functioning of academic communication. Thus, ordering the meanings of a concept in its contexts could leave space to an overarching notion, albeit a very abstract and formal one, which the participants of the discipline would take as descriptive. This is, however, not guaranteed. This core is as precarious as the context’s boundaries are impermeable. Some contexts “discipline” their participants in order to avoid exactly the problem of “meaning spill-overs” that would impede a coding and decoding following the rules shared therein. Academic disciplines are therefore often more stable contexts. Their debates are rather more inclined to keep a core meaning of a concept and to discipline its use.

This conceptual analysis is also interested in *the purpose of power-explanations in IR/IPE*. Why do we need them? Why do we look for them? What do we want with them? This last question has been often celebrated or neglected because it seemed to refer to the ideological underpinnings and value-preferences of the researcher. I think that a more sociological analysis of knowledge was useful at the behavioural and positivist heydays in the social sciences (and is useful in those parts where this approach still holds). It was useful because it reinserted the scientific production into its social context. It also furthered the awareness of the theory-dependence of facts. By this is meant the phenomenon that theoretical preconceptions establish what is counted as a fact. Particular empirical events can be accounted for by different, even incompatible explanations (or theories). It is, however, unfortunate that the debate became linked to ideology. It spurred the irritated reaction of those who defended an ideal of value-free science and who felt offended by the claim that they were furthering particular interests, whether wittingly or

not. Furthermore, claiming that ideological interests are at stake in cognition, meant a form of relativism that was considered deadly for scientific work. As argued below, concepts of power can have a variety of purposes, but it would be reductionist to tie them to ideologies.

Even in academic disciplines, the meaning of a concept is, however, not always stable. Indeed, there are some concepts which are relentlessly debated, probably even more than in other contexts. Whereas some concepts have a taken-for-granted meaning which is only rarely questioned and thus discussed, some concepts, such as “power”, seem unable to get their meaning fixed. Especially in political science and in IR, “power” has shown a considerable resistance to being fitted into one stable meaning. Indeed, a basic characteristic of IR is exactly the shaky consensus on one of its central concepts. It is widely used, and the discipline reacts “as if...” the meaning was clear. Whenever there is a “breakdown” in this taken-for-granted meaning, and questions arise about “what do you actually mean by ‘power’...?”, it is like opening a Pandora’s Box. The practitioners of the discipline act as if they were sharing a common code, and regularly realise that they do not.

Three main answers have been given to this problem. The first response consists in pointing to an inherently ambivalent meaning of “power”. Another approach focuses on the different purposes for which is used. These different purposes refer to different contexts and require different power concepts, that cannot be subsumed under one general formulation. Finally, the irreducibility of power concepts might be due to the fact that they belong to the particular category of “essentially contested” concepts. The next three sections will discuss them in turn.

## 2. The ambiguity of “power”

Starting from the everyday usages of power implies first a look at usual meanings of the word. These are coded in the standard dictionaries of the particular languages. In English (but also in French or German, for instance), power refers to two different core meanings: one is an ability, the other is a particular relationship. The first can be expressed through the locution “having the power to”, whereas the second would refer to “having power over”. Which of the two meanings should be emphasised is still debated.

Privileging the “power-over” reading is meant to stress the relational, and in particular, positional aspects of power. In a first approximation, relational aspects imply the fact that power is always both assessed and exercised in social relations and must therefore take them into account. Positional aspects refer to the hierarchical distribution of power in a given group or society. Therefore, those power analysts who preferred to look at *social* power find the dispositional concept of “power-to” wanting. It does not show if the exercise of power to achieve involves relationships in which some members of the group exercise power over others.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the possibly conflictual nature of

<sup>5</sup> William Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, pp. 101ff., 115.

exercises of power can be lost from view.<sup>6</sup> In this reading, “power-over” is more inclusive than “power-to”, and thus to be preferred.

In contrast, Peter Morriss defends a dispositional concept of power as an ability.<sup>7</sup> He shows that often we use a concept of “power-to” without needing “power-over”. Indeed, the attempt to rephrase power in the latter terms sound in several cases awkward and artificial. Further, he does not see why one would necessarily need a concept of power-over to analyse the conflictual aspect of power. To do this, “we can easily look at someone’s power *to* kick others around, or their power *to* win conflicts. Everything that needs to be said about power can be said using the idea of the capacity to effect outcomes.”<sup>8</sup>

It seems true that one does not need a relational or positional concept of power describe conflictual social relations. There is, however, a difference in the focus and usage of power in the two phrases. “Power-to” might focus on very particular, possibly single power contests, where the overall hierarchy can be lost from view. “Having power-over” asks why bargainings happen, and why not. Furthermore, a conceptualisation of “power-over” makes a difference not with regard to power’s conflictual nature *too court*, but through the methodological shift to see power relations from the receiving side. “Power-over” implies repetitive, durable and inter-issue linked power relations. “Unless explicit disclaimers are offered, use of the former locution implies that a bidder can draw on several of these forms in conjunction...; it implies that the relationship is durable; and it suggests that the matters with respect to which the bidder can or does limit the recipient can be rather extensive and important.”<sup>9</sup>

It seems, therefore, reasonable to leave the question open. Power is an ambiguous concept.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, one could even argue that the exact link between the two basic meanings of power is what the conceptual analysis of power has been mainly about.

### 3. Purposes of power

#### 3.1. Peter Morriss’ three contexts

Peter Morriss’ first systematic study of the question: why do we need “power”? suggests a second theoretical explanation for the never ending power-debates. In common language, the term power seems to resound so significantly, that this question, although obvious for other terms, has never been systematically explored. Indeed, Morriss suggests that power

<sup>6</sup> This was the view of Steven Lukes at the time of *Power: A Radical View*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> We will see later, that for studying power he refers, however, to a relational concept.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power: A Philosophical Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> For an argument to accept the duality of the concept of power, see Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power. From Domination to Transformation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 17-27. Similarly, in his discussion of *social power*, Felix Oppenheim distinguishes between “exercising power” and “having power” and endorses the ambiguity of power. See Felix Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, chapter 2, and p. 184.

theoreticians generally concentrate on one of the different contexts, for which power concepts are used, claiming this one to be the only one. Needless argument could be avoided if the plurality of contexts were recognised in which “power” operates.

Morriss distinguishes the practical, the moral, and the evaluative contexts.<sup>11</sup> In the practical context, we are interested in power because we want to know what things we can bring about. Agents want to know their powers in order to realise their opportunities. Knowing their abilities, they might also decide which to enhance. People are also interested in power, because they want to know what other agents can bring about. If we want to reach an outcome, and it is not in ours but in some other agent’s reach, this knowledge could be the beginning of getting a deal done. The most important interest might perhaps be to avoid being harmed by the effect of powers. Therefore, one has to know them.

We are interested in power, secondly, because through its assessment, moral responsibility can be avoided. “Ought” implies “can”. Accused persons need to show that they could not bring about an action, or that they could not prevent it.

Finally, Morriss finds a third context, the evaluative one. Here people are interested in concepts of power in order to judge not individuals, but social systems. The power debate took largely place in this context. “What is wrong with being powerless is that you *are* powerless — that is lacking in power. And if people are powerless because they live in a certain sort of society — that is, they would have more power if the social arrangements were changed — then that, itself, is a condemnation of that society.”

### 3.2. Power as an explanatory concept?

Most interesting are also the two contexts that Morriss discards. The *theoretical* concern about power, that is, the interest in theorising about power, can be subsumed under other contexts. For instance, the blueprints that policy analysis produces for the more effective power management in the bureaucracy or other parts of the executive, are done within the practical context. Assessments of political and social structures, as in the power debate in political theory, are part of the evaluative context. The explanatory context, that is, the attempt in academic discourse to make out of power a crucial term in producing (scientific) explanations is rejected outright by Morriss.<sup>12</sup> Since this has been the purpose of many power conceptualisations in IR, his arguments are worth pondering. But first we need to consider those attempts at proposing such an approach. The attempt to make power a central explanatory variable is particularly strong in the case of those writers who see power as a concept which is related to *causation*. I will argue that there are two ways in which power and cause have been linked. Some scholars have defined power as a causal concept. Others conceive power as a mere disposition which can be used in rational explanations where actions can contribute to a causal effect. But then, the causal weight in the explanation must be shifted from power to the theory of action.

<sup>11</sup> For the following, see Peter Morriss, *Power*, pp. 37-42.

<sup>12</sup> For the following, see Peter Morriss, *Power*, pp. 42-45.



*“Power” as causation*

Cause and power are considered similar, because they are employed to interpret situations in which there is the possibility that some event will intervene to change the order of other events. Power relations could, therefore, be redefined as a subset of causal relations: “For the assertion ‘C has power over R,’ one can substitute the assertion, ‘C’s behavior causes R’s behavior’.”<sup>13</sup> One way to distinguish the subset from the general set is the criterion of intentionality. Hence, the definition shifts in favour of a causal relation between C’s wants and R’s action: “Influence is a relation among actors such that the wants, desires, preferences or intentions of one or more actors affect the actions, or predispositions to act, of one or more other actors.”<sup>14</sup>

This does not entail that the powerful openly tries to influence other actors. The important point is that, as in the distinction between *having* power and *exercising* power<sup>15</sup>, the intention has been imputed and an actor’s behavior has changed accordingly. The “rule of anticipated reaction” can thus be accommodated. In this case, R reacts to imputed intentions of C without these necessarily being explicit. In addition to this, the redefinition includes the “predisposition to act” in the definition of behaviour.<sup>16</sup> The idea of change is now not limited to a changed manifest action, but can also refer to changed beliefs, which, however, for empirical approaches, must become manifest in an empirically controllable way. Finally, the causal aspect of power should be seen as a form of *probability*, not of causation in a strict sense. Dahl also notes that it is impossible to apprehend the whole chain of power (or causal) relations: the scholar will always need to focus on a part of the chain, the focus being determined by his interest and theory.

Other scholars have developed on this idea of probabilistic causation. One of the best presentations is certainly Oppenheim’s. For him, “to assert that R’s action x was influenced by some action y of P is not merely describe what R did, but also to provide at least a partial *explanation* of P’s conduct. (Why did R do x? Because P influenced him to do x).”<sup>17</sup> The probabilistic causation of power is expressed in conditional sentences. The different concepts of power can also be distinguished to the extent that action x is either sufficient or necessary and sufficient for action y to happen or to be prevented. A possible condition for the coercion of an actor B, is that actor A possesses a revolver and the skill to use it. Acquiring both is not yet causing anything, and hence it is not an exercise of power. If actor A points the revolver to actor B (action x), and the latter is induced (1) to do an action which B did not thought of doing before, or (2) to refrain from an action

<sup>13</sup> Robert A. Dahl, “Power”, in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12 (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 410.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*. 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 30. Dahl does not distinguish between power and influence.

<sup>15</sup> Robert A. Dahl, “Power”, p. 413.

<sup>16</sup> Here Dahl is probably following probably following Jack H. Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975).

<sup>17</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 33.

B thought of doing (actions y), we have a causal nexus. Here, we have an exercise of power. Action x is a sufficient condition for action y. If one can presume that there are other ways to cause B to do y, this condition is not necessary for causing action y.

Tying power so close to concepts of causal interaction, is often accompanied by a critique of conceiving power as a mere ability. The choice of a causal concept, instead, has often been motivated by the endeavour to avoid the power-as-resource fallacy, that is, to impute power to the possession of resources and not to causal interaction. In the above mentioned example, it is not the possession of a revolver which has a causal effect, although it is the base for such an effect. There are different solutions to this problem. Given power resources, one solution consists of tying the causal effect to the intention to act, as done by Dahl. Here, one does not need to refer to actions as such, but can start the causal chain from (imputed) intentions of A which affect the behaviour of B. For those writers as Oppenheim who want to include non-intended effects into a causal power analysis, this is not a reasonable starting point. Yet, in his discussion of this issue, he comes nevertheless close to this position.

That the United States has power over Mexico's foreign policy implies not merely that the former is capable of, e.g., deterring or preventing the latter from joining the Soviet bloc; it means that the United States has acquired and now possesses sufficient military and economic resources so that, in the (very unlikely) event that Mexico attempted or even merely contemplated joining the Soviet bloc, the United States *would* prevent or deter Mexico from doing so.<sup>18</sup>

He rejects an ability-concept of power, because it cannot distinguish “between the power an actor has and his ability to acquire (and exercise) it.”<sup>19</sup> I think his example cannot convincingly show his case. There is first the very definition of the concept not just as “an ability to do” but as the “ability to exercise power”. Morriss' discussion shows that such a definition is not needed for dispositional concepts. Moreover, the example gives a very rigid condition, namely that the US not only *could*, but *would* act. This cannot be derived from Oppenheim's definition of action. Since he uses a non-behavioural concept of action, he accepts that mere dispositions can have an action effect and are thus to be counted as such.<sup>20</sup> In his example, however, he ties deterrence to an assumption of a necessarily realised potential. In so doing, Oppenheim refers to an intention (to exercise power) that he himself wanted to discard in order to leave his definition as descriptive (i.e. as neutral) as possible. It is not obvious why the mere capacity to do something could not cause an action. Indeed, Oppenheim's attempt to link power to realised effect, could be seen as a fallacy in itself, namely what Peter Morriss has called “the exercise fallacy”.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, pp. 15-18.

*“Power” as explanatory variable*

Avoiding the exercise fallacy has led several scholars to define power as a dispositional concept. This does not entail that the causal nexus of power and effect is excluded. Yet, it is not part of the definition of power. “So, power, as a dispositional concept, is neither a *thing* (a resource or vehicle) nor an *event* (an exercise of power): it is a capacity.”<sup>22</sup> Whereas in a causal approach power explains an outcome, here it is not a disposition like power, but only actions which can be causally linked to outcomes. Actions can, in turn, not be *explained* by power. Consequently, Morriss refuses any theoretical role for power. He rightly claims that power is not a causal concept in a covering law model of explanation. I will argue, however, that rational choice approaches, for instance, can use power, understood as a disposition, as one (among others) central variables in their explanations.

When Morriss criticises the theoretical context for using power, he defines explanation in the naturalist sense. Theory-building refers, then, to the purposes of explaining past events and predicting future ones. Positivist epistemology presupposes the same logic for both undertakings. It proposes the method of the covering law. Morriss argues that power, as a dispositional concept referring to a potential event, cannot “explain” in this sense.

Morriss gives two examples.<sup>23</sup> A cup, which has the property of being fragile, falls on the floor. It breaks. Morriss says that to explain the event by referring to the cup’s dispositional property of fragility, seems unsatisfactory. For the reader/observer, however, it is not clear what the event is. If the event to be explained is the breaking of the cup, then the reference to the physical properties of the floor and the cup can, given the laws of gravity, provide an explanation of the cup breaking up. After all, if the floor was covered by a thick and plush carpet, some cups could be expected not to break. Yet, in this situation, this breaking of the cup is not very puzzling. Thus the event is, rather, to explain why a cup fell on a floor despite the existing knowledge that it would break. We would look then for other reasons or causes. Either a draft pushed it (another cause), or a Greek wanted to celebrate a wedding (reason), or it happened inadvertently by a careless gesture (another reason). In these last cases, the fragility of the cup does not explain the event. But this is not linked to the impossibility to subsume the event under a causal or rational explanation, but to the definition of the significant event.

The other example Morriss offers, is that if we are wondering why we keep seeing black ravens, it does not explain the event if we are told that ravens are always black. But here we are actually not explaining an event at all. We are giving a definitional statement. If there is an event in his example, it is the *wondering* over the blackness of ravens. This presupposes that the person who wondered could recognise ravens, but defined them with-

<sup>22</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 19. For a discussion of both the event and the vehicle fallacy in IR and IPE, see Daniel Garst, “Thucydides and Neorealism”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1 (March 1989), pp. 20-22.

<sup>23</sup> Dispositional properties belonging to objects, not human abilities, provide the examples. A human dispositional property is a disposition that, in contrast to abilities, cannot be influenced by (human) will, as for instance, the disposition to hear and understand a language.

out a particular colour. To explain this event, one does indeed not refer to the blackness of ravens. Again, it is the definition of the event which is important. Thus, it seems that Morriss has not made a convincing case against the use of dispositional properties in a covering model of explanation, but against their significance for understanding events.

How do his arguments apply for rational explanations referring to human abilities? This is exactly where power is supposed to help in understanding/explaining, for instance, world events. Morriss is concerned with the usual tautologies in power *studies*. Often, power is deduced from its effects, and the same effects are “explained” by reference to the same powers. “The US won against Iraq, because it was more powerful” and “the US is more powerful than Iraq, because it won against it.” To avoid this tautology is at the very core of conceptualisations of power.

Although it may be perfectly satisfactory for practical purposes to infer power from effects and effects from power without any independent access to either, it is scarcely likely to be accepted as a legitimate procedure in sociological study. Indeed there must be many circumstances where it will not do even in the less demanding context of everyday life... Nonetheless, this circular reasoning should not be treated solely and simply as weakness to be eradicated from our thinking. It is also an empirical social phenomenon in its own right and its existence must be borne in mind. We cannot dismiss the possibility that this circular reasoning and circular accounting is all there is to power.<sup>24</sup>

In order to avoid this tautology, a dispositional concept of power referring to abilities, and more generally potentials, must be distinguished from an analysis of the *exercise* of power in which power together with other factors explain an event. If we recall the above examples, we were interested in the acts, and not in the potential to effect an act. This potential cannot itself explain the act; the meaningful reconstruction does. An assessment of power will at least refer to the inventory of acts at the disposal of the agent (the potential), the resources, the value that other agents attach to these resources in order to know if there are really power resources, and the skills to use them.<sup>25</sup> This assessment of power is only one part, never a sufficient condition in an explanation/ understanding of an event. Even the actual exercise of power refers only to *outputs*, not to *outcomes*.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, I think Morriss is right when he argues that power as a disposition cannot provide an explanation of a (social) event. He has not excluded “power” as a variable in an explanation of social interactions. For instance, within a rational choice approach

<sup>24</sup> Barry Barnes, *The Nature of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> In *Power*, chapter 19, Peter Morriss himself uses this account for the *study* of power based on resources. The theory-dependence of the assessment of resources will be tackled later.

<sup>26</sup> For this formulation, see Hubert M. Blalock jr., *Power and Conflict. Toward a General Theory* (Newbury Park, London, New Dehli: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 28. For a similar argument to sever the link between power and outcomes, see also James A. Caporaso and Stephan Haggard, Stephan, “Power in the International Political Economy”, in Richard J. Stoll and Michael D. Ward (eds), *Power in World Politics* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), pp. 99-120.

“power” can play a role in explanations, if it is supplemented by a theory of action.<sup>27</sup> Keith M. Dowding proposes such a theory, in which it is “... the structure of the individual choice situation that does most of the explanatory work. It is the set of incentives facing individuals which structurally suggest behaviour to them; by studying those incentives together with assumptions about the way actors make decisions we come to understand why people act as they do.”<sup>28</sup> The assumptions about individual behaviour are rational choice assumptions of self-interested utility maximisation and (qualified) rationality. Action is explained by reference to an actor’s desires (or wants), and her beliefs. “Desires motivate whilst believe channels action. So an individual who desires  $z$  will do  $y$  because of her beliefs  $x$ . The three go together in a triangle of explanation and given any two of the triumvirate the third may be predicted and thereby explained.”<sup>29</sup>

Power is the variable which tells what an individual *could* do. If individuals have a particular desire and intend to act according to their beliefs, they must have this action at their disposal. Power summarises the variable complex of basic acts, resources and skills. As such, it is an explanatory variable. The causal nexus to the outcome is much weaker than in causal definitions of power.<sup>30</sup> We are sometimes interested in its assessment, because power allows us to better anticipate the distribution of power which are part of future events. This is, as Morriss rightly notes, part of the practical context.

#### 4. Power as an “essentially contested” concept?

Besides the inherent ambivalence of the usage of power, and the irreducible multiplicity of the purposes for which we use it, a third reason has been advanced to understand the never ending disputes over the meaning of power. “Power” is said to belong to the special category of “essentially contested” concepts for which no account can compel rational assent. For this thesis, three reasons have been advanced: value-dependence of social theories, the link of power with moral responsibility, and the theory-dependence of facts.

##### 4.1. Value-dependence of “power”

The most often repeated reason is the value-dependence of social theories. If power is to play a role in social theory, its definition and interpretations will be inevitably value-laden.

[I]ts very definition and any given use of it, once defined, are inextricably tied to a given set of (probably unacknowledged) value-assumptions which predetermine the range of the empirical application... Thus, any given way of conceiving of power (that is, any given way of defining the concept of power) in relation to the understanding of social life presupposes a criterion of significance, that is, an answer to the question

<sup>27</sup> Keith M. Dowding, *Rational Choice and Political Power* (Hants: Edward Elgar, 1991), pp. 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> Keith M. Dowding, *Rational Choice and Political Power*, p. 18 (originally entirely emphasised).

<sup>29</sup> Keith M. Dowding, *Rational Choice and Political Power*, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> As we will see later, David Baldwin’s causal concept of power also carefully includes a variety of conditions before power can be said to cause an outcome.

'what makes *A*'s affecting *B* significant? ... but also... any way of interpreting a given concept of power, is likely to involve further particular and contestable judgements.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, Lukes' (and Connolly's) argument was both too easily embraced and too hastily rejected. On the one hand, value-dependence became quickly synonymous with "ideological". From here, it is only one step to analyse Lukes three dimensions as the three expression of our well-known Anglo-American ideological triad.<sup>32</sup> Being told that academic enterprise is politics (although nobody ever said, "nothing but politics"), and being offered this well-known menu for choice, another part of the discipline reacted with contempt. Since the implication of this argument seemed to be a form of radical relativism, the argument was judged incoherent.<sup>33</sup> Others argued that value-dependence is nothing which distinguishes power from other concepts in the social sciences. Thus, if the evaluative character was meant to establish a particular category of concepts in the social sciences, it is wrong. If it aims at describing a characteristic of all social science concepts, it is not "enlightening".<sup>34</sup> Yet, the attempt to limit the issue to value-dependence is to underrate some other important facets of Lukes and Connolly's argument.

#### 4.2. Power and moral responsibility

When we see the conceptual connection between the idea of power and the idea of responsibility we can see more clearly why those who exercise power are not eager to acknowledge the fact, while those who take a critical perspective of existing social relationships are eager to attribute power to those in privileged positions. For to acknowledge power over others is to implicate oneself in responsibility for certain events and to put oneself in a position where *justification* for the limits placed on others is expected. To attribute power to another, then, is not simply to describe his role in some perfectly neutral sense, but is more like *accusing* him of something, which is then to be denied or justified.

William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, p. 97  
(original emphasis).

<sup>31</sup> Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 26; and Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure", in his *Essays in Social Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 4, 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Cox, Paul Furlong, and Edward Page, *Power in Capitalist Society: Theory, Explanations and Cases* (Brighton: Harvester Press/Wheatsheaf Books, 1985), p. 224.

<sup>33</sup> For this position, see Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 185. For a position, which reads like a critique of essentially contested concepts, but which seems close to its precepts, see David A. Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power* (New York, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 8. "Without disputing the truth of this argument in some ultimate sense, there is still a case to be made for attempts to explicate a concept of power with as little ideological bias as possible. Just because perfect neutrality is impossible, it does not follow that 'anything goes'." This had never been disputed by Lukes or Connolly.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 89-90.

Whereas Morriss distinguishes between three different contexts, Connolly's position seems to imply that the moral context, albeit not always the primary one, is necessarily implied when we use an idea of power. Morriss refuses this argument because we often do not refer to "power" for blaming individuals, but for evaluating societies. Furthermore, he says that often we want to know power to be prepared for what others can do to us. I think that this is right. But the argument to be discussed here is not about why we *look* for power, as Morriss does, but why we *call* something a phenomenon of power, as Connolly and Lukes do. This shifts the question: does it mean that assigning power asks for justifications, be they individual or collective? Is justification necessarily linked to responsibility?

At this point, their position comes close to seeing in the attribution of power an "illocutionary speech act".<sup>35</sup> "Speech act" refers to the simple idea that we do something when we speak. Sometimes uttering sentences give just factual accounts. These statements are called locutionary speech acts. When we give an order or make a promise, for instance, we do something by uttering a sentence. This is an illocutionary speech act. Finally, a perlocutionary speech act happens, when we use speech to have an impact on the receiving agent. In short, there are three different acts: when we speak; we act by speaking; to effect something through the fact that we act by speaking. The difference between the last two is sometimes difficult to establish. Habermas argues for restricting the perlocutionary act to all those situations where we want to effect something by hiding it within the speech act. It is a form of teleological action which has effect only because it is kept from view. Illocutionary acts, instead, must be open to have an effect. They have an effect through the conventions that are attached to the acts. If we accept an order, or register a promise, some conventional reactions can be expected.

Let us take the example of an order. Giving an order is an illocutionary speech act. But its aim might not necessarily be limited to the recognition of the order by the receiving agent, but can be outside the context of the order. Spy stories are filled with orders that are meant to be traps.

Here, I think Lukes and Connolly made a very important point. "Power" implies an idea of counterfactuals, i.e. it could be also otherwise. The act of *attributing* power redefines the borders of the "politics" in the sense of the "art of the possible". Accepting an attribution of power might result in particular actions. Lukes rightly noticed that Bacharach's and Baratz' conceptualisation of power sought to redefine what counts as a political issue. To be "political" means to be potentially changeable, i.e. not something "natural", "God-given", but something on which agency could potentially have an influence. (Operational) Power analysis, as all other assignments of power, is therefore a

<sup>35</sup> For the following, see the discussion of Austin's speech act theory in Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1: Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung*. 3rd rev. ed. (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1981/85), pp. 388-397.

power exercise or “political” itself.<sup>36</sup> This does not mean that this political potential is always taken up. Political acts can be without any significant effect.

Power, then, is a contestable concept, partly because of its conceptual connection to our ideas about responsibility, and these concepts themselves form a part of our politics. For to accept the criteria of power advanced by critics is to take a large step into the critical perspective they articulate; and the same holds for the acceptance of criteria advanced by apologists.<sup>37</sup>

To refer to power, hence, opens up a debate. In this debate, the claim that power was involved must be justified. Justification implies an assessment about feasibility and responsibility. When “power” is analysed through its attribution, it is “framed less from the point of view of predicting the future behaviour of recipients than from a perspective that enables participants and investigators to locate responsibility for the imposition of limiting conditions by linking those conditions to the decisions people make, or could make and don’t.”<sup>38</sup>

In a sense, verbalising “power” is hence redefining “political space” in all the three different contexts established by Morriss. In the practical context, seeing power from the recipient side tends to look for effects whose origins might have been unknown before. We attribute power in the practical context to show that some harmful effects, to which we are exposed, could be avoided. This could mean that nonintended or unforeseen effects must now be justified as being unavoidable (or as being too costly to change, and so forth).<sup>39</sup> Here the issue of moral responsibility is only potentially present. The moral and evaluative context is evoked when the power wielders keep on exercising power and/or preventing the better social arrangement from being realised. Thus, Lukes and Connolly are not necessarily tying all critique to a question of individual blame. Their attempt to find an empirical referent for power structures in some elites implies blame, exactly as within Morriss’ approach, if they are preventing change. By looking at what power can tell us about possible changes, Lukes and Connolly do not refer to incremental and/or structural changes, but to those that can be realised by human initiative. Societies might be criticised. The call for action must be, however, individualised, including collective agents. Only then, when action is found wanting, is blame applied to individuals.

Nothing of the just said implies that attributing “power” is necessarily “radical” or “progressive”. Redefining the boundaries of political issues, the “art of the possible”, just means this. The only implication is a questioning of the status quo.

<sup>36</sup> For a similar point, see John Hoffmann, *State, Power and Democracy: Contentious Concepts in Practical Political Theory* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), pp. 7-8.

<sup>37</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> In a similar vein, Daniel Frei notes that the concept of power is fundamentally identical with the concept of “the political”; to include something as a factor of power in one’s calculus, means to “politicise” it. See Daniel Frei, “Vom Mass der Macht”, *Schweizer Monatshefte*, vol. 49, no. 7 (1969), p. 647. This is one of the purposes of Susan Strange’s ascription of structural power to the US (see Part III).



### 4.3. Power and theory-dependence of facts

#### *Morriss' critique of the theoretical context*

For Morriss it is not possible to assess *a priori* that there can be no rational solution to a conceptual analysis of power. He thinks that two observers could assess perfectly compatible power distributions, but would judge their normative impact differently. For him, the concept of power is not essentially contested, but its necessarily multiple significance depends on the perspectives, or contexts, of those using it. He gives an example of a CIA agent, interested in power for practical purposes, who wants to know how to intervene in society, whereas the democrat wants to evaluate society.

The CIA analyst and the democrat do not disagree about the distribution of power: they have such different perspectives that they never reach the point of disagreement. More subtly, the utilitarian celebrating the amount of power to satisfy wants is not disagreeing with the romantic bemoaning the lack of power for self-development. What sort of power we should concentrate on is not for me to say here: that depends on which of the many competing perspectives we should adopt. And deciding *that* involves an exercise of quite a different sort from the one that I have been engaging in this book. That exercise is however helped no end by realizing that the different perspectives are not fighting over a single concept of "power": they are employing different concepts. When we have worked out which concepts are appropriate to each perspective, then we are in a position to start choosing between the perspectives. We can scarcely do this when we don't know what a key term in the perspective's vocabulary is supposed to mean.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, his position is not that different from Lukes'. Both agree that the common underlying idea of power is accompanied by a multitude of different power concepts. When Lukes gives one concept but different conceptions, he presupposes that there is something which is common to all and which can be assessed by rational, or as he calls it "formal", discourse. Consequently, his (re-)definition of power, namely "the capacity to bring about consequences", where "the affecting is seen as non-trivial or significant"<sup>41</sup> is conspicuously close to Morriss' "capacity to effect outcomes." The difference is, then, the inclusion of a criteria of "significance" already within the formal definition, which Lukes spells out as "interest-furthering". Yet, when Morriss analyses how to aggregate powers to evaluate the overall power of an agent, it again sounds like Lukes' account.

So having ascertained who has the power to do what; how *do* we reach an assessment of overall power? Well, clearly the power to bring about some disastrous end cannot be a valuable thing; it is only outcomes that are in some way worthwhile that need to be considered. People are the more powerful the more important the results they can obtain are; or, to put this another way, the more these results accord with their interests. Conceptions of interests, then, play a crucial role in the *aggregation* of separate powers,

<sup>40</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 205.

<sup>41</sup> Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure", in his *Essays in Social Theory*, p. 4.

not in the *identification* of power... A fully fledged theory of interests would be necessary to perform such aggregations and comparisons; I don't possess such a theory but, luckily, I don't need one to elucidate concepts of power. The result of this intrusion of notions of interest into ascriptions of power is that it is more than likely that two researchers with different views on how to weight the importance of various outcomes will fail to agree on comparisons of power, even though they might agree completely on who has the power to do what.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, the difference is mainly in wording, whereas the debate supposedly seemed to evolve around rationality and relativism. Morriss argues for a conceptual analysis where *concepts* of power and their definitions are derived from (1) a common base in the word "power", and (2) its understanding through the three contexts and perspectives derived from social theories.<sup>43</sup> "It is (at best) quite senseless to argue about what *the* concept is that a word refers to. In this book I have tried to show that we use the word 'power' to refer to a large number of different concepts, and that we do not get anywhere by asking which of these concepts is *the* 'concept of power'."<sup>44</sup> Morriss' "word" and "concepts", become Lukes' "concept" and "conceptions" respectively.

The real crux of the argument is another. Morriss tries to establish a conceptual analysis which is formulated in such a way as to avoid at this *conceptual* stage the necessary reference to social theories, although he admits that at the *operational* stage they will produce irreducible power assessments. Thus, both agree that at this stage the analysis, "power" cannot be assessed by rational argument.

#### *Meta-theoretical dependence of concepts*

This theory dependence of social facts suggests the third way to argue for essential contestability. It points to the under-determination of social theory by evidence. Available evidence may be compatible with a variety of different, or even incompatible, theories. Contrary to the natural science, there exists, moreover, a mutual interaction between observer and observed agents. Marxism is maybe the most noticeable case in point. Here one could defend a form of essential contestability by the dependency of theory, empirical and conceptual analyses, on *meta-theoretical commitments*. John Gray compares individualist (voluntarist) and structuralist (determinist) frameworks of explanation and concludes that "since judgements about power and structure are theory-dependent operations, actionists and structuralists will approach their common subject-matter — what goes on in society — using divergent paradigms in such a fashion that incompatible explanations

<sup>42</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 89 (original emphasis).

<sup>43</sup> The exact link between contexts and perspectives is, however, not spelled out.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 204.

(and descriptions) will be produced.”<sup>45</sup> He argues that these are incommensurable views of man and society which elude a rational choice.

Until now, there has not been a definition of power which would be neutral to these two different meta-theoretical positions. For some, the basic individualist-intersubjectivist divide is so great that it is merely sufficient to register that a “considerable distance separates a notion of power understood as the exercise by A of power over B, contrary to B’s preferences, and a notion of power as a multiplicity of practices for the promotion and regulation of subjectivity.”<sup>46</sup> I will try to exemplify this divide by comparing Oppenheim’s neutral definition of power with one that it cannot include: Niklas Luhmann’s conceptualisation of power.

Oppenheim’s definition of power refers to the causal relation between one action and another. Oppenheim is careful to define action widely so as not to be caught in the behaviouralist camp. He also avoids any reference to preferences, intentions, or interests, that would make the definition contentious. He shows cases where none of them is needed. His definition is so wide that he has been criticised to confound power with social causation. Yet, he excludes explicitly all those situations “in which R’s behaviour, while determined by the behavior of others, cannot be causally linked to the behavior of a *determinate* person or group, but in which the causal chain must, at least for practical purposes, stop at impersonal factors such as inflation, unemployment, overpopulation, lack of resources—to take just a few calamitous examples.”<sup>47</sup>

A form of impersonal power is defined by Luhmann. In order to understand his definition, one needs, however, to refer to his social theory. I think that just giving its general traits will make the unbridgeable difference visible.

Luhmann defines power as a symbolically generated medium of communication which reduces complexity and allows calculus. Power is in the communication, not in action. It is not causal, but it functions by attributing causality to a particularly steered communication.<sup>48</sup> Let us explain this definition step by step.

Luhmann’s basic units are not agents and structures, but self-reproducing (or autopoietic) systems, individual and social. Communication consists in the coupling of systems where the “external” is included into the internal reproduction processes. This process can be conditioned by particular media of communication. A medium of com-

<sup>45</sup> John Gray, “Political Power, Social Theory, and Essential Contestability”, in David Miller and Larry Siedentop (eds), *The Nature of Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 94. This should not be confused with the two levels of analysis of an individualist approach, where “those who would base their measure of power on the quality and quantity of economic, political, or social resources available to an actor in society are deemed structuralists, while those who measure power by the use of the resources to achieve desired ends are considered behavioralists.” (Charles R. Spruill, *Power Paradigms in the Social Sciences* (Lanham et al.: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 1-2.)

<sup>46</sup> Peter Miller, *Domination and Power* (London, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> This is my synthetic statement of his approach. This and the following is not more abstract than Luhmann’s approach itself.

munication is a code of generalised symbols that steer the transmission of inputs into the respective selection processes of systems. Power is such a medium of communication.

Power in communication works as a catalyst for communicative interaction. In order to avoid the uncertainty of selection processes, stabilised expectations are needed. Media of communication develop specifically generated codes that fulfill this function.<sup>49</sup> The particular reason for the development of the medium “power” lies in those communicative situations where *both* partners see alternatives whose realisation they want to avoid.<sup>50</sup> Power is a code-steered communication which is present (and not only potential) in communication, whenever a less worthy alternative has been chosen. Power as a medium links up one combination of alternatives to be avoided with another less negatively judged one. This transmits the selections of action from the more to the less powerful.<sup>51</sup>

The medium achieves this by the means of two mechanisms. One are *reductions*. Since the exact weighing of alternatives is not possible, communication develops substitutes for the medium (with the same function of stabilising expectations) that, in turn, become a symbolically generated code of power. These substitutes are, for instance, *hierarchies* (presupposing already a ranking) or *history* (attributing power through past events). Linked to the latter are symbols of *prestige/status and keeping up to significant events*. Finally, there are *rules deriving from contracts*. In all these cases the direct communicative recourse to power is replaced by a reference to symbols, that oblige normatively all parties and take account of the presupposed power ranking.<sup>52</sup> The second mechanism are rules to facilitate the calculus of alternatives, as for instance, the zero-sum (or constant-sum) principle.<sup>53</sup>

At this point it might be good to synthesise the differences. Power is not in action, but in communication. “Will” and motives, i.e. traditional attributes for the explanation of action are not important for the assessment of action and for power. “Will” is not prior to power, in the sense that power would overrule a preexisting will. In a code-steered communication, expectations can be such that the will of an actor for a specific action never arises. Will is neutralised by power, not broken. Power-steered communication constitutes the will of one partner by *attributing* to his actions successes, expectations, and respective motives. “Power does not instrumentalise an already present will, it constitutes that will and can oblige it, bind it, make it absorb risks and uncertainties, can tempt it and make it fail.”<sup>54</sup> “Motives” are not an origin or cause of action. The communication process, in the execution of power, attributes motives to systems. This allows the com-

<sup>49</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1975), pp. 12-13. His approach is, of course, indebted to Talcott Parson’s social theory and concept of power. He adds the unexpected twist to conceive the content of this code very much in Dahl’s terms, namely as an ascription of causality.

<sup>50</sup> In a later text, Luhmann specifies that he thinks here about negative sanctions. See Niklas Luhmann, *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (Berlin et al.: de Gruyter, 1990), p. 157.

<sup>51</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>52</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, p. 21 (my translation).

municative system to socially understand action. Motives are necessary not for action, but for its understanding.<sup>55</sup> In other words, “power” is a possibility that communication attributes to actors, as their capacity and characteristics, as much as “decisions” are attributed to the process of selection.<sup>56</sup> In a nutshell: Power does not cause an outcome, but communicatively regulates the attribution of causality for understanding that outcome.<sup>57</sup>

Now, Oppenheim claims that his definition of power does not exclude particular ways of conceiving a social theory. As Luhmann’s approach, his conceptual analysis is a reconstruction which does not necessarily keep the meanings of ordinary language. It is meant to provide social theory with a conceptual clarification. Indeed, since social sciences lack a full-fledged theoretical system, academics are put before the choice either to leave political concepts unexplicated or “explicating them independently of any theories with the purpose of clarifying whatever isolated generalizations have been made or may be asserted.” The task is the preparation of a conceptual scheme in which a theory in the stronger sense will one day be developed, even if this might never happen. “Again, I have no better justification than to point to the results of this study.”<sup>58</sup>

Luhmann’s concept of power cannot be accounted for by the conceptual frame that Oppenheim prepared. It is a form of power which has an agent referent, but whose causality does not derive from the agent, but from the communication process. Luhmann’s holistic epistemology and system theory has no place for an action-concept of power, like Oppenheim’s — except as a construction of the communication itself.

This does not mean that Oppenheim’s undertaking is useless. On the contrary, both Morriss’ and Oppenheim’s conceptualisations are excellent clarifications that can be expanded in very different theoretical directions. These may be behavioural or not, empiricist or not, rational choice or more widely intentionalist. They must be individualist approaches. When confronted with theories and concepts that rely on completely different meta-theoretical assumptions, they cannot include them. There, their effort must be repeated.

## 5. Conclusion: Explanatory perspectivism

The present conceptual analysis of power applies to the meanings and purposes of “power” in the particular context of the academic discourse in IR/IPE. It will be carried out under the following assumptions. First, power seems to be an ambiguous word. The attempts to reduce it to either of the two basic meaning-complexes, “power-to” and “power-over”, have been unconvincing. Indeed, the link between these two seems to be at the core of many conceptual analysis.

<sup>55</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>56</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Macht*, pp. 25, 46.

<sup>57</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Political Theory in the Welfare State*, p. 157.

<sup>58</sup> Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts*, pp. 188-189 (the quotes are from p. 189).

The drive for a univocal concept has meant that there have been few attempts to examine the relationship between the competing meanings which inhere in the compound concept. Instead, in order to avoid a sense of linguistic ambiguity, there has been a commitment to recasting the concept in onedimensional terms without ever exploring if the sense of ambiguity at the linguistic level reflects a sense of ambiguity which is lodged in reality.<sup>59</sup>

Second, the concept of power is used in three contexts, the practical, moral and evaluative context. In scientific discourse, it is used as an explanatory variable which could be subsumed under the practical context. Third, the attribution of power potentially opens a debate about the “art of the possible”. It redefines the boundaries of what should be counted as a political issue. The conceptual analyses of power, as far as they question existing approaches, are therefore part of “politics” themselves. They are part of a self-reflection of politics. Finally, meta-theoretical rifts will be reflected on the conceptual level. “Although social ontologies do not directly dictate the content of substantive theories, they do have conceptual and methodological consequences for how theorists approach those phenomena they seek to explain, and thus for the development of their theories.”<sup>60</sup> The meta-theory dependence of the concept of power entails that there is no single concept of power applicable to every mode of explanation. This implies that a limited range of views about power can be held that are both reasonable and yet different, possibly incompatible. Concepts are not self-sufficient. They derive their meaning from the meta-theoretical modes of explanation and particularly from the substantive theories (as e.g. Realism) in which they are embedded.<sup>61</sup> Power is significantly different if conceived in a rational choice or intersubjective/structuralist approach.<sup>62</sup> This insight, which informs the whole of the following conceptual analysis, could be called *explanatory perspectivism*.

It implies that concepts can be evaluated on the basis of their coherence within their respective meta-theoretical and theoretical frameworks.<sup>63</sup> It furthermore entails that, for the purpose of this study, it makes no significant difference who is the particular reference

<sup>59</sup> Richard Little, “Deconstructing the balance of power: two traditions of thought”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 1989), p. 99.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, “Institutions and International Order”, in Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James Rosenau (eds), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches for World Politics in the 1990s* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> This is now acknowledged across rather different conceptualisations. See, for example, Barry Barnes, *The Nature of Power*; Stewart Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*; Richard L. Merritt and Dina A. Zinnes, “Alternative Indexes of National Power”, in Richard J. Stoll and Michael D. Ward (eds), *Power in World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publications, 1989), p. 27; Sik Hung Ng, *The Social Psychology of Power* (London *et al.*: Academic Press, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> I use the word “structuralist” in the traditional sense of social theory, where it refers to a particular category of theories that rely on holistic explanations. Waltz’ approach has been, unfortunately for the interdisciplinary debate, sometimes labeled structuralist. I will refer to Waltz as a neorealist or systemic Realist.

<sup>63</sup> For a similar approach, see John Gray, “Political Power, Social Theory, and Essential Contestability”, pp. 96-98; and Sarah Joseph, *Political Theory and Power* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

for power, provided the theory using power is constructed within the same mode of explanation. For instance, rational choice approaches and the power concept they include remain basically the same in the analysis of nuclear brinkmanship, organisational agenda-setting, or personal threats. They also remain alike across the different spheres to which they are applied, whether economic, social, financial, or others. Power is distinguished through its role in explanatory frameworks, not through the fields to which it is applied.

## Conclusion to Part II

Since the crisis of Realism, the discipline of IR is looking for the definition of its subject matter. On the one hand, with the emergence of the welfare state and the international order of embedded liberalism, there was both an increased potential and a necessity for state action and its international coordination. From here derive the development of international organisations and their studies, including the later regime analysis. With the decline of the Cold War, more issue areas enter the “high” political sphere. On the other hand, states see their control diminishing without necessarily losing it to anyone in particular. Markets, “structures” seem to be in control of events. Processes at the domestic level take part of a seemingly expanding “world politics”.

For their potential to “politicise” issues or to redefine political issues, debates about concepts of power are typical of times of political redefinitions. Yet, power as a generic reference does not mean very much. The “capacity to effect”, or “to bring about significant consequences” do not much distinguish “power” from “love”. Neither will other concepts, as, for instance, that “[power’s] widest meaning is”, looking from the power bidder’s view, “that of a potential for change”<sup>64</sup> or, from the recipient’s one, the “ability not to have to change, to adjust to change or to tolerate change.”<sup>65</sup>

Concepts of power derive their meaning from the meta-theoretical framework and the substantial theories in which they are embedded. In political theory the debates have moved away from behavioural theories to conceive power in a more diffused way; as, for instance, to think “power without the King” (Foucault). This mobilised meta-theoretical and theoretical debates. The extension of the “power-problematique” provoked a more pluralist application of methods and the import of the philosophy of language.<sup>66</sup> A distinction emerged between approaches that kept an individualist framework, and those attempts to overcome methodological individualism without falling into the trap of determinism.

On the grounds of this distinction, Part III will analyse how concepts of “structural power” tried to redraw the boundaries of “world politics”. They drew in particular on the two main debates within the hermeneutical tradition that chapter two has introduced. The first is the meeting point of Critical Theory with normative theory to redesign the understanding of sovereignty; the second is a historicist Realist and Dependency rapprochement to study state-society complexes within IPE. Some wanted to enlarge the realm of politics in order to “reveal embedded power and authority structures, provoke critical scrutiny of dominant discourses, empower marginalised populations and

<sup>64</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, *Three Faces of Power* (Newbury Park et al.: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> John W. Burton, *International Relations: A General Theory* (London et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Jean Greisch, “Le pouvoir des signes, les insignes du pouvoir. Notes sur la nouvelle question du pouvoir”, in Jean Chatillon et al. (eds), *Le Pouvoir* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1978), pp. 180ff.



perspectives, and provide a basis for alternative conceptualisations.”<sup>67</sup> Others, in the 1980s, used power concepts to restrict the realm of politics. Indeed, Neorealism’s concept of power can be shown to be the most limited in the debate — also with regard to the already established power debate in IR. Part III will start with an introduction into this traditional power analysis in IR.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas J. Biersteker, “Critical Reflections on Post-Positivism in International Relations”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3 (September 1989), p. 264.

## **Part III**

# **Realist Power Analysis and its Critics**

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### Introduction to Part III

The twist of the argument presented here is to make a paradox work. Realists generally believe that whatever one can say about their story, it is a story on power writ large. Indeed, for some it is already enough to point to the undiminished importance of power in international politics to defend Realism as the central approach.<sup>1</sup>

My contention is that by turning Neorealist, Realists are in fact restricting themselves to a limited view of power. This point is not particular new. As chapter 4 will try to show, many of the discussion that haunt power analysis in IR today, have already been raised in the “Second Debate”. Despite these criticisms, Realism knew another forceful economic turn in the 1980s. Again, the market analogy became the background against which IR should be theorised.

But, as we have seen in Part II, Realism was no longer in a paradigmatic position. Its Neorealist turn was heavily criticised. By doing this, the power debate in IR caught up with political theory. All the stages of the “power debate” were replayed. In political theory, we had a first criticism launched against some fallacies of the “ruling-elite model” or “stratification theory”<sup>2</sup> as, for instance, the infinite regress of hidden ‘ruling elites’ or the fallacy of seeing in power a constant-sum game. In IR/IPE, this stage can very well be seen in the critique of dependency by Lall, Cohen, and Warren<sup>3</sup> and in the paradigmatic exposition of the “pluralist” power approach to IR/IPE, presented in Keohane and Nye’s *Power and Interdependence*.<sup>4</sup> Although these critiques of dependency are made with very different purposes in mind, they all emphasised the fact that all actors are exposed to asymmetrical and interdependent power relations. Henceforth, power needs to be approached in an issue-specific and relational analysis. As we will see in chapter 5, David Baldwin has provided the most encompassing conceptualisation of such a relational and causal concept of power in IR.

Against such an approach, which consisted in the careful analysis of decision-making procedures in key issue-areas, Bacharach & Baratz’s “second face of power” tried to integrate notions like “non-decision-making.”<sup>5</sup> This is the stage where first concepts of structural power within IPE come in - elaborating, as we will see, on an original ambiguity in Bacharach and Baratz’s use of the concept. Their nondecision making can mean both the inherent bias of any organisation that benefits some more than others (nondecisions as “structural bias”) and the conscious manipulation of the bias to affect outcomes

<sup>1</sup> Michael P. Sullivan, *Power in contemporary international politics* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> See for this so-called *pluralist approach*, e.g. Robert Dahl, “A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model”, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 52 (1958), pp. 463-469, and Nelson W. Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963/1980).

<sup>3</sup> See Sanjaya Lall, “Is ‘Dependence’ a useful concept in analysing underdevelopment?” *World Development*, vol. 3, no. 6 (November-December 1975), pp.799-810; Benjamin Cohen jr., *The Question of Imperialism. The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence* (London et al.: Macmillan, 1973), and Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Bacharach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty. Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

in an advantageous way (nondecisions as “antedecisions”). Caporaso, and Gill & Law stressed the first, Krasner focused on the second meaning.<sup>6</sup>

At the third stage, the idea of a structural bias is carried to its logical conclusion with Lukes’ *third dimension* of power, which tries to capture the idea of “false consciousness” within power analysis. Such “false consciousness” stands for the biased interest perception of the actors which gives advantage to some of them, while avoiding the very awareness of a conflict of interest. Power analysis centred on (decision-making-) conflicts cannot account for the very power-intensive situations where no conflict of interests is apparent.<sup>7</sup> This step can be compared to Gill and Law’s usage of hegemony and structural power (stressing the impact of normative structures).

Finally, the necessary link of intentionality to power is challenged by views that stress non-intentional effects of actions as well as by power conceptualisations such as those by Bourdieu and Foucault where the empowering of agents (through power/knowledge) is considered prior to intentionality in explanations. Susan Strange’s structural power recaptures the non-intentional effects of actions and poststructuralist writers, especially Richard Ashley, have introduced Foucault and Bourdieu into IR/IPE power analysis.

As I will argue in chapter 6, these concepts of “structural power” have contributed to a better understanding of power phenomena. Some of their meanings cannot, however, be accounted for by the economic rational actor model which underlies Neorealism. In other words, they invite scholars who take power seriously to leave the Neorealist approach. Taking power seriously might lead Realists beyond Neorealism.

Part III will proceed in three steps. Chapter 4 presents the first critiques of Realist power analysis during the Second Debate. Chapter 5 shows the way Neorealism conceives of power and its analysis, before chapter 6 discusses its limits with reference to concepts of structural power. Finally, a power analysis around a dyad of concepts, agent *power* and *impersonal* governance is presented as a coherent way to account for the different meanings of power in IR/IPE.

<sup>6</sup> For the IR analysts, the following Part III will give the necessary references.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Lukes, *Power. A Radical Analysis*.

## 4

### The Inevitable “Struggle for Power” in Realist Explanations



International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.

Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 13.

For Realists, “power” is first a real world phenomenon, and then an analytical concept. From the impalpable “fact of power politics”, the National Interest, defined in terms of power, has to derive. There was no consensus, however, from where, in turn, the never ending conflictuality of International Relations should be derived. The lowest common denominator, the inevitable “struggle for power”, has been attributed to different causes. Some scholars rooted the struggle for power in objective laws of human nature. In this account, war is the ultimate international spill-over of innate human drives. The phenomenon of power and the resulting (balance of) power politics are the inevitable background for foreign policy formulations. Power is the key descriptive and explanatory term in the theory. But critics have, as we will see, found the concept wanting; indeed, the “balance of power” turned out to be a largely redundant concept in this framework of analysis.

When Realism increasingly turned into a social scientific discipline, the emphasis shifted from the balance of power as an *effect* of universal laws of human nature, to the balance of power as *cause* of the ubiquitous struggle for power. Not human nature, but the conditions of survival in an environment of international anarchy cause the struggle for power. This does not affect the central explanatory place of power in Realist theory. “Power” defines the objective environment, the available policy means, and the immediate end of foreign policy. The maximisation of power was finally likened to the maximisation of wealth in economic theories. With a sole motive (survival), and a convertible means (power), IR seemed predestined to imitate the admired success of economic sciences, not only in rationally accounting for behaviour, but in actually establishing general laws.

Actual politics could be guided by a scientific *raison d'État* which consists in finding the optimal means-ends relation for an actor in any particular situation.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, as some Classical Realists argued, “power” cannot play the central explanatory role it was assigned to in scientific Realism. On the macro-level of analysis, the distribution of power does not determine behaviour. For the multiplicity of mutually irreducible foreign policy goals, no unique rational behaviour, as the maximisation of power for instance, can be assumed on the micro-level of analysis. International explanations can use the *concept* of power, but *power-theory* is no shorthand for international explanations.

## 1. The Balance of Power as Theory

The duality of power as an empirical fact and as an analytical/political means informs the traditional Realist power approaches. The very meaning of (international) politics reflects this duality. When politics refers to the “art of the possible”, the conflictual and power-based international realm identifies the “real” nature of international politics. At the same time, power can be used as a means to limit the conflictual nature of this sphere. Both politicians and statesmen struggle to devise stabilising and conflict-mitigating strategies in a condition of international anarchy from which they know that conflict cannot be eradicated but, at best, only temporarily domesticated. “Power” refers both to the limits and possibilities of diplomacy. “Power politics” is therefore only partly the cynical view which is often imputed to Realists. This applies only to their assumptions about politics. “Power politics” is also the only way to make a successful diplomacy. In their blueprints of successful diplomacy, and these are no monopoly of so-called idealists, Realists often include the long-term effects of power shifts. The result can be far away from the kind of rapacious definition of the National Interest which is often implied when we speak of *Realpolitik*. Bismarck wanted the legitimation of German unification, not Alsace-Lorraine.

The paradigmatic statement for Realism is Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations*. It not only marked an entire generation of thinkers and politicians, but provided also an ingenious synthesis of this basic duality. His solution has been (slightly) changed in the behavioural period when the security dilemma or the “third image” became the major organising principle for theoretical (not much for practical) Realism.

### 1.1. Power and Politics in Realism: The case of Morgenthau

The difficulty with Morgenthau’s concepts is that they have been so canonised, if not “mummified”, that every interpretation which is based on his text must inevitably unravel

<sup>1</sup> For a restatement of the *raison d'État* in a Realist tradition, see Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, “Zum Selbstverständnis des neorealistischen Ansatzes”, in his edited *Grundelemente der Weltpolitik*. 3rd ed. (München: Piper, 1977/86), p. 20. The term neorealism refers here to the “Munich School of Neorealism” which is prior and slightly different from “Neorealism”, understood as the economic turn of Realism in the US since the late 1970s.

more subtlety and miss the rather crude way it has been often used in the academic debate. Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* was published when the Cold War had just started. Unfortunately for the different shades of his thoughts and for Cold War politics, only some features of his book gained prominence in the kind of simple-minded anti-communist containment policy which was the despair of more than one Realist, Morgenthau included.<sup>2</sup>

The central stage of his book is “power politics”, or, better, the *necessity* of such a politics. Knowing these necessary and immutable facts is the base for a rational foreign policy. Hence, his approach can be summarised as a study of the tendencies and forces of international politics (the objective background), which frame the range of possible options in the attempt to limit conflict through self-regulatory mechanisms (balance of power) and normative constraints (law, morality, and world public opinion). The study of international politics should provide the analyst (and practitioner) with the ability to ascertain the national interest which consists in maximising the instrumental rationality of available means and possible ends, rather more in the long than the short run.

In this enterprise, the concept and reality of power enters at all stages. It defines the objective background, the possible options, the most significant means, and, in particular circumstances, the ends of foreign policy, when power needs to be balanced. Although it is difficult to imagine how one phenomenon and concept could do all this, Morgenthau tied together a theoretical package which seemed to work and did certainly appeal. It can be synthesised in the following way (see also Figure 4.1).<sup>3</sup>

Power seemed so self-evident, and power politics so much the rule of international relations, that the derivation of the key-concept “power” was only seldom done. Morgenthau is one of the few writers who rooted and defined the concept of power. He gives a universal anthropological foundation.<sup>4</sup> He posits “three basic drives of all man”: the drive to live, to propagate, and to dominate.<sup>5</sup> In a world of scarce resources, their aggregation must lead to a *struggle for power*. This is the nature of the “political”.

Realists define the political sphere by power and authority relations in which individuals, groups, and nations struggle for power in its double, effective and legitimate, form. History is cyclical, and no catharsis can put an end to these permanent struggles.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thus, he does not endorse a view of the international realm as a purely Hobbesian state of nature. He attacks Machiavellism. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 169. On pp. 397-98, He attacks also Hobbes’ theory of Leviathan as a solution to the state of nature.

<sup>3</sup> For a being slightly more complete, the figure includes some more items, which are not all necessary for the following argument.

<sup>4</sup> This merit for having taken seriously the concept of power is also acknowledged by Morgenthau’s critics, less the anthropological solution. See Ekkehart Krippendorff, *Internationale Beziehungen als Wissenschaft. Einführung 2* (Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus Verlag, 1977), pp. 36-37.

<sup>5</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> For a good presentation of the characteristics of Political Realism, see Norberto Bobbio, “La teoria dello stato e del potere”, in Pietro Rossi (ed.), *Max Weber e l’analisi del mondo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1981), p. 217.



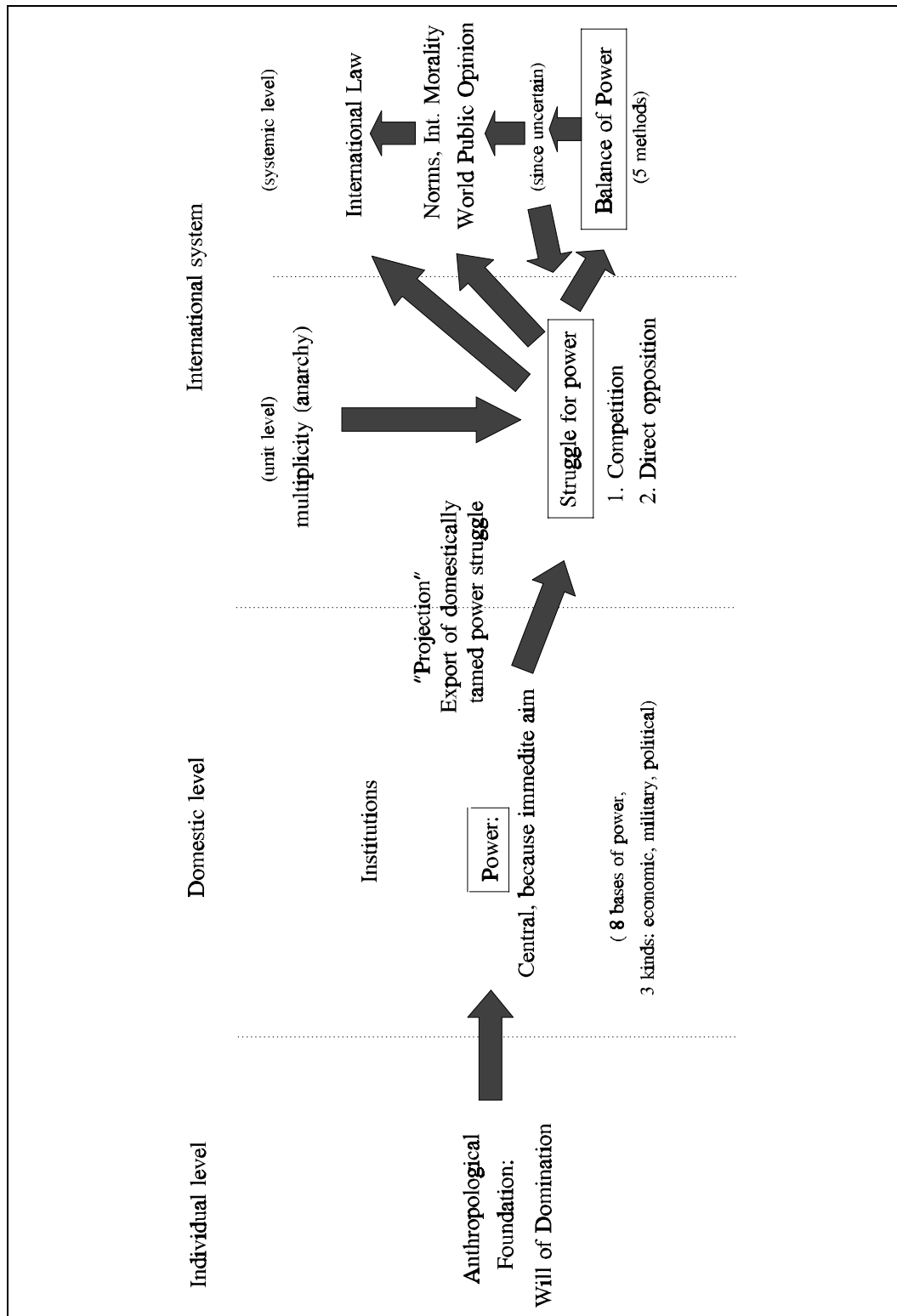


Figure 4.1 A synthesis of Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*

Morgenthau’s originality lies in the way he links up the anthropological foundation with the international level.

A great problem for international theory has always been the conception of the unitary national actor. Nations as such cannot be “seen”. Since Realists often embrace forms of empiricism, this means that, as such, they cannot exist. Morgenthau consequently refers to the state representatives and not to a collective, when he speaks about foreign policy or national power. At the same time, the advent of mass societies (and mass armies) make the calculus of national power increasingly wide. The mere reference to the policy elites seems insufficient to account for it. To bridge the two, Morgenthau discusses the phenomenon of nationalism which papers over the gap between the larger population and the state elite. Nationalism provides hence a fairly unitary actor.

The origins of nationalist solidarity with the foreign policy elite is, in turn, derived from the struggle for power. He argues that on the national level, the state of law is able to control the struggle for power — but not to eradicate it. The frustrated drive for power is exported on the international level. “Not being able to find full satisfaction of their desire for power within the national boundaries, the people project those unsatisfied aspirations onto the international scene.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the democratisation of national policies exacerbates the power projections. In the context of the mass societies and nation states of the twentieth century, the most dangerous phenomenon is exactly this, the universalisation of nationalist drives that are not respecting the shared codes of conduct of the “Aristocratic International”. He calls it “nationalistic universalism”.<sup>8</sup> Hence, Morgenthau solves two problems in one: in the struggle for power, states can be treated as individuals, without, however, the state being reified as a unitary actor.<sup>9</sup>

The struggle for power, now at the international level, opposes those who want to keep and those who want to change the distribution of power. Before coming to the balance of power as the main or universal instrument of international politics, we might first have a look at Morgenthau’s concept of power. Power is causally defined, similar to Dahl’s view, as A’s control over B’s actions.

Morgenthau is careful to distinguish between political and military power. Political power is a psychological relation between two actors. In this relation, one actor controls certain actions of another actor through influencing the latter’s mind. This influence may be exerted through orders, threats, persuasion, or the combination of any of these. In contrast, military power is not a psychological, but a physical relation. The existence of a military power relationship is not supplementary to, but exclusive of, political power.<sup>10</sup>

He establishes a criteria for the choice of a concept of political power, namely “its ability to explain a maximum of the phenomena which are conventionally considered to

<sup>7</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> For the two concepts and their discussion, see Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 184ff.

<sup>9</sup> At some points, he makes, however, the jump from the anthropological foundation to the unitary state. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 327.

<sup>10</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 14f.

belong to a certain sphere of political activity.”<sup>11</sup> This seems to leave a strong explanatory weight on power. But Morgenthau shows that power is a very elusive concept.

It cannot be measured. There are eight different bases of power: geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, and the quality of diplomacy. Their assessment is vitiated by three main fallacies. Power is relative and must be assessed in comparison with other national powers. It is not permanent, because power bases change. Finally, there is no single factor from which one could derive power, certainly not the military one.<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau concludes that “[r]ational calculation of the relative strength of several nations, which is the very lifeblood of the balance of power, becomes a series of guesses the correctness of which can be asserted only in retrospect.”<sup>13</sup>

The same judgment applies to the balance of power. Despite some passages we will tackle later, and for which he has become famous and criticised, Morgenthau argues that the balance of power is not mechanical, but emanates “from a number of elements, intellectual and moral in nature.”

Of the temperateness and undecisiveness of the political contests, from 1648 to the Napoleonic Wars and then again from 1815 to 1914, the balance of power is not so much the cause as the metaphorical and symbolic expression or, at best, the technique of realization. Before the balance of power could impose its restraints upon the power aspirations of nations through the mechanical interplay of opposing forces, the competing nations had first to restrain themselves by accepting the system of the balance of power as the common framework of their endeavors (...) Where such a consensus no longer exists or has become weak and is no longer sure of itself, as in the period starting with the partitions of Poland and ending with the Napoleonic Wars, the balance of power is incapable of fulfilling its functions of international stability and national independence.<sup>14</sup>

The book is devised to provide some thoughts on how normative arrangements, or institutions as world public opinion, could function as a replacement for the declining aristocratic code of conduct. Morgenthau reserves a role to norms and public control which is far from insignificant; it is the necessary cultural (normative) force that enables a balance of power system to work. If international politics has been democratised, the new foreign policy elites must learn to follow the established roles. Since we cannot rely on (aristocratic) tradition, we have to convince them rationally to adopt an understanding of foreign policy that would reproduce the traditional diplomatic culture. This is the basic tension between the analytical and the policy-oriented Morgenthau, a tension which is

<sup>11</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 13, fn. 1.

<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that he does not privilege *in the last resort* military preparedness or war as the ultimate bases and practices of international power politics. Yet, Morgenthau is also a foreign policy analyst; and here the military factor is not necessarily the only, or even the most important, one.

<sup>13</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 163, 164, 165.

fundamental for many Realists. On the one hand, diplomatic culture is not the product of rational deliberation, but of cultural and socio-historical tradition. On the other hand, the diplomats must be rationally convinced to become part of this culture, because it is the only one, for the Realists, that can assure at least some conflict limitation.<sup>15</sup> This tension is also what triggered the first critical reactions against his approach. The target was the main explanatory variable, the balance of power.

### 1.2. The Redundancy of the Balance of Power

Morgenthau states that he is using the balance of power in four different meanings: (1) as a policy aimed at a certain state of affairs, (2) as an actual state of affairs, (3) as an approximately equal distribution of power, (4) as any distribution of power. This self-avowed ambiguous concept is, however, accompanied with rather far-reaching claims, as born witness by the following quote

The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it. We say “of necessity” advisedly. For here again we are confronted with the basic misconception... that men have a choice between power politics and its necessary outgrowth, the balance of power, on the one hand and a different, better kind of international relations on the other... It will be shown... that the international balance of power is only a particular manifestation of a general social principle to which all societies composed of a number of autonomous units owe the autonomy of their component parts; that the balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable but are an essentially stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations...<sup>16</sup>

Here, the “necessary” balance of power appears suddenly as a kind of “political law”, or even “universal law”, namely a self-regulatory mechanism.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, some critics have redrawn a fourfold typology of Morgenthau’s balance of power concept:

- (1) a descriptive category: a situation (see Morgenthau 2-4);
- (2) a prescriptive category: a prescriptive category (see Morgenthau 1);
- (3) an analytical category: a self-regulatory mechanism;

<sup>15</sup> In the following editions of the book, Morgenthau upgraded the last part. Many of the subtleties of his discussion notwithstanding, he introduced the account with six main principles of Political Realism, which give the entire enterprise a more one-sided outlook. Now, the regularities of international relations and the permanence of human nature were read as “necessities” to which all rational foreign policy, in the National Interest, have to obey. Realism turned from a doctrine of historical experience and shared knowledge to a social science theory which is “governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.” See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 3rd ed., Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 125.

<sup>17</sup> For these understandings, see respectively Ernst Haas, “The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda”, *World Politics*, vol. V, no. 3 (July 1953), p. 467; Inis Claude jr., *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 27ff.; and Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, in his *Power Politics*, edited by Carsten Holbraad and Hedley Bull (Penguin: Harmandsworth/RIIA, 1979), p. 179.

(4) an ideological category: symbol and propaganda.

The discussion here is concerned with the analytical potential of the balance of power. There two questions have usually been raised. Is it really possible to speak about a “law” of the balance of power? Which balance of power is “necessary”?

Leaving aside the truism that “any configuration of power distribution” is necessary, Morgenthau claims to use the term in the meaning of equilibrium. This, following the critiques, is patently false. The British “balance of power” policy in the nineteenth century has aptly been described as “balance for the continent and power for Britain”. It was British neutrality which could step in to deter a continental challenger by the tipping of the balance strongly to the defender’s side. Only when Germany perceived herself strong enough to match or overcome its opponents-plus-Britain, did the balancing policy not work any more. A stalemate situation with an arbiter interested in the status quo is a better description for this epoch than “equilibrium”.

“Balance of power” cannot mean a policy directed towards equilibrium, either. Since the struggle for power is not limited at any given point, every power seeks superiority, not equilibrium. Finally, it does not mean that balance of power is the necessary international system for the management of peace and war, because Morgenthau himself quotes other techniques (international law, diplomacy...). Therefore, in Inis Claude’s analysis, Morgenthau cannot prove any necessity of the balance of power.<sup>18</sup>

This brings us back to a reformulation of the initial tension in Classical Realism, namely the impossibility “to separate the balance of power as law, as something that happens in politics, from the balance of power as policy, as something that politicians make happen.”<sup>19</sup> This tension suggests two answers to Claude’s critique.

One reaction could consist in the stressing of the intentional character of the balance of power. The analysis would shift towards the concept of *raison d’Etat*. This alludes to a policy of moderation which could effect a functioning balance of power system. Here, the balance of power retains a certain value, but is far from being a universal law. Its analytical content is rather void. It has become a description of the shiftings of power and their coalitions, which is “synonymous with the state-system itself”.<sup>20</sup> It adds, however, a prescriptive idea for the reasonable statesmen to follow their *intérêts bien entendus* (Albert Sorel). They should be moderate in their quest for power, “lest in trying for too much”, they precipitate a self-defeating reaction of fear and hostility.<sup>21</sup>

The critique could be also countered by stepping up the “scientist” part. Here, the balance would be the outgrowth of the always opposing forces of the status quo and its revision. As a result, the balance of power is entirely synonymous with the “struggle for

<sup>18</sup> For this argument, see Inis L. Claude jr., *Power and International Relations*, pp. 25-37. For a short restatement, see Inis L. Claude, “The balance of power revisited”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 1989), pp. 77-85.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, p. 180.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, p. 179.

<sup>21</sup> Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations*, p. 37.

power”. For Morgenthau at least, this can be rooted in universal laws about human nature, but it does not imply any idea of equilibrium or peace. It might mean peace and preponderance of the defenders of the status quo or war and equilibration through the revisionists. The balance of power is, then, only “necessary”, because it is essentially a redundancy in Morgenthau’s theory of international relations.

It is this last reading which is needed to understand Morgenthau, where he says that “[t]his uncertainty of all power calculations not only makes the balance of power incapable of practical application, it leads also to its very negation in practice.”<sup>22</sup> If the balance of power were necessary, it could not be denied in practice. This signifies that, given the international realm of anarchy, worst-case thinking and miscalculations will inevitably produce the risk of preemptive wars and arms races. The scientific programme starts here anew — with a shifting research question. Before, the balance of power appeared as the necessary outgrowth of human nature, but was found redundant because synonymous with the struggle for power. Now, the analysis turns to laws which are not the innate drives of human nature, but under which the patterns of behaviour typical for self-securing actors in qualified environments can be subsumed. Here, different constellations of the struggle for power explain actors’ behaviour and the resulting dynamics of the international system. If the techniques of the social sciences succeeded in calculating power, one could project rational policies which were conducive to realising a functioning balance of power, understood as an equilibrium.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Purposes and limits of power in the “Second debate”

In the scientific turn of the second debate, the emphasis shifted from the balance of power as an *effect* of universal laws of human nature, to the balance of power as *cause* of the ubiquitous struggle for power. Indeed, it is by taking the second reading as fundamental, that the first approach to the the balance of power must be judged redundant. The balance of power does not explain anything. It is itself explained by something else.

Yet if the scientific enterprise of IR is no longer a deduction from human nature for the characterisation of a necessary form of world politics, but a deduction from the different constellations and dis/equilibria of power, then the theory of Realism must be rearticulated. During the 1950s, Realists attributed increasingly to the international realm itself the cause of power politics. This reshuffled the different layers of Morgenthau’s approach. It found its early formulation in the so-called “security dilemma”. The scientific laws of the IR programme concerned the relationship between particular patterns of

<sup>22</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 155.

<sup>23</sup> In a sophisticated version of this approach, Daniel Frei argues that peace is precarious because of the lack of international consensus on the assessment of power. The search for the measure of power is therefore an expression of the search for peace. In this context, political science should help to bring about such a consensus, which does not necessarily mean an objective measure. Political science can enhance communicability by analysing and possibly by synthesising those phenomena that work as indicators of power. See Daniel Frei, “Vom Mass der Macht”, *Schweizer Monatshefte*, vol. 49. no. 7 (1969), in particular pp. 646-654.

distributions of power and states' behaviour. They were modelled often in analogy to the "laws" of the economic market, as later explicitly done in Neorealism.

The scientific turn was strongly criticised at the time.<sup>24</sup> With the accrued emphasis on the international realm, its very definition has been scrutinised. The result was that many scholars rejected a unique characterisation of the international realm as anarchic, where the only difference from one system to the other would consist in the distribution of power. Or, in other words, states' behaviour is underdetermined by the distribution of power. Raymond Aron attacked the very attempt to model IR on economic explanations. Central to all these criticisms is the idea that the scientific turn attaches an explanatory value to the concept of power, which the latter is unable to fulfill in IR.

## 2.1. The Security Dilemma in the Behavioural Period

### *The triumph of the third image*

The anthropological foundation suffered from severe criticism. For once, behaviouralists are not exactly happy with such vague and "metaphysical" terms as the innate power instinct. Furthermore, the discipline of IR has always been riddled by an identity problem, in particular in its Realist definition. The identity problem becomes obvious when we think about Morgenthau's definition of politics as the struggle for power. This posits a similarity in kind, albeit not in degree, between domestic and international politics. For him, the international realm is not a Hobbesian state of nature. This is necessarily so for his foundation in human nature. But if domestic and international politics are alike, why would we need a discipline of international relations? Two answers would have been consonant to Morgenthau's approach. One would consist in the education of an elite to run the foreign policy of a country concordant with the experiences and traditions of the diplomatic culture. The other one, necessary in times of the democratisation of foreign policy, consists in the analytical frameworks which would provide diplomats not only with the tools of their vocation, but with a scientific justification for the primacy of foreign policy. One is inductive and historical, the other deductive and scientific. By looking at the different societal background and recruitment traditions, one can partly understand why the English School has stuck more to the first and the "American Social Science" more to the second strategy.<sup>25</sup>

The foundation in human nature was replaced by a new approach constructed around the "security dilemma". Neither human nature, nor domestic spill-overs, but the international system itself was driving this state of war.<sup>26</sup> There we would have the best

<sup>24</sup> In fact, many arguments about Neorealism and its critics are but a revival of this debate.

<sup>25</sup> By this I do not only mean a possible preference for more scientist approaches in the US. It is rather Stanley Hoffmann's point about the perception by many European emigrants who populated the political science departments, that the US was inadequately prepared for its new role as a superpower. A new elite had to be formed, and quickly.

<sup>26</sup> This refers, of course, to the famous triad in Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

of all possible worlds: (1) a scientific IR would not need to rely on empirically insecure foundations about human nature, and (2) IR would become a distinct subject matter, because its regularities were understood in a way different from domestic politics. The solution was provided by what today would be called a collective action problem in an environment characterised by high uncertainty and risk. Objective laws might not necessarily be based in human nature. But the balance of power, here understood as the clash of powers, has “inevitable” effects:

Thus all politically active nations must be intent upon acquiring as much power as they can, that is, among other things, upon being as well armed as they can. Nation A which feels inferior in armaments to nation B must seek to become at least the equal of B and if possible to surpass B. On the other hand, nation B must seek at least to keep its advantage over A if not to increase it. Such are, as we have seen, the inevitable effects of the balance of power in the field of armaments.<sup>27</sup>

In an international realm, that is characterised by “multiplicity” (Morgenthau) or by a form of “anarchic society”<sup>28</sup>, one actor’s quest for security through power accumulation cannot but exacerbate feelings of insecurity of another actor, who in turn, will respond by accumulating power. “Since none can feel entirely secure in a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is one.”<sup>29</sup> In this account, the anthropological foundation is much less demanding: not an innate drive for domination, but a drive for survival. Power politics is thus not an anthropological, but a social problem. It appears only when there is no stable normative setting. Here, security cannot be entrusted in anyone other than one’s self. The context of anarchy, as different from a functioning state of law, triggers the “inevitable” power politics.

#### *International Theory as the systematic study of the distribution of power*

From the point on, when the security dilemma became the fundament of (some) Realist theorising, the main research programme of scientific Realism was the polarity(-stability) debate. The basic question was (and sometimes still is), which distribution of power, bipolar or multipolar, would produce higher stability. Thus, a causal relationship represented the basic research problem of the discipline.

Behaviouralist IR tried to establish functioning laws of international systems which are characterised by different constellations of powers. The scientific aim is a partial theory of international behaviour. Although one cannot predict individual events, it should be possible to predict a patterned behaviour within a particular kind of international system. At the same time, “the theory should be able to predict the conditions under which the

<sup>27</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 315.

<sup>28</sup> This term is from the original explicit articulation of this line of Realism. See John H. Herz (1950) “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma”, in his *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics: Essays on International Politics in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Mc Cay Co., 1976), p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> John H. Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma”, p. 73.



system will remain stable, and conditions under which it will be transformed, and the kinds of transformations that may be expected to take place.”<sup>30</sup>

Kaplan is careful in stating the assumptions upon which such an approach depends. He assumes that repeatable behaviour occurs in the international system and that these international patterns of behaviour are related to the characteristics of the entities participating in international politics and to the functions they perform.

Yet, when we come to the systems he describes, Morgenthau’s problem reemerge. On the one hand, his systems are empirical extrapolations, i.e. they are not derived from a set of variables. There are two systems that have been empirically realised, namely a multipolar “balance of power” and a (loose) bipolar system. The other four, and later eight, systems are, in turn, extrapolations of the dynamics of the two verified systems.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the theory has predictive claims. Yet, with the hindsight of the empirical strategy first mentioned, it does not provide the required hypotheses for causal prediction. They are, in fact, rationalisation of why particular systems have proven enduring, and not others. These rationalisations are done from the level of the main actors (the powers in the systems), not from inherent qualities of the system.

Whereas Kaplan is primarily interested in the effect that the the distribution of power has on the behaviour of individual states, the following polarity-debate asks about the causal links between the distribution of power and stability/peace.<sup>32</sup> Given the security dilemma and the assumptions of self-interest of actors, Kaplan finds two systems which correspond to stable equilibrium situations. These are the two empirically verified ones. Given a historically contingent, but stable, system the research could consist in predicting that rational actors would behave according to the rules. The hypotheses link causally the distribution of power and the patterned behaviour of the actors. Although history is full of accidents, he says, “a high correlation between the pattern of national behavior and the essential rules of the international system would represent a confirmation of the theory.”<sup>33</sup> In a sense, the polarity debate depends on Kaplan’s findings. A rather

<sup>30</sup> Morton A. Kaplan (1966), “Variants on Six Models of the International System”, in James Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 292. This article is an expanded version of “Balance of Power, Bipolarity and Other Models of International Systems”, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1957), pp. 684-695.

<sup>31</sup> This, as such, is no problem. It shows how the distribution can be used to describe different historical international systems. See, in particular, Richard N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics. International Systems in Perspective*. 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963/77).

<sup>32</sup> For the classical texts of the polarity-stability debate, see Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Stability of a Bipolar World”, *Daedalus*, vol. 43, no. 3 (1964), pp. 881-901; Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability”, *World Politics*, vol. XVI, no. 3 (1964), pp. 390-406; Richard Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity and the Future”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1966), pp. 314-327. For an excellent discussion of this debate, see Jef Huysmans, “Discourse-Knowledge-Practice: Reinterpreting the Polarity-Stability Debate” (Paper presented at the Inaugural Pan-European Conference of International Relations, Heidelberg, 16-20 September 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Morton A. Kaplan, “Variants on Six Models of the International System”, p. 293.

mechanical causal link can only exist if the patterned behaviour of states under particular order can be taken for granted.

Yet, Kaplan’s project cannot be verified in the way he suggests. If the rules of the empirically verified systems are empirically extrapolated, and not deductively derived, there might be many reasons why states behave as the rules would have it. They need not have anything to do with the configuration of power and their functions. How does one control for the fact that a diplomatic culture, that is norm-driven behaviour, makes the system work, which is not necessarily linked to independently assessed rational action? There might be cases of historical overdetermination, or cultural/social determination which will be swiftly read as a corroboration of the theory, but which is purely spurious.

Hence, Kaplan at times comes close to a functionalist circle. Rational behaviour is functional to the stability of the system and, since the latter is known, it is rational for the actors. “The kind of equilibrium is not mechanical like the equilibrium of the seesaw, which re-establishes itself mechanically after the disturbance. Indeed, it is a ... homeostatic equilibrium... The international system is not only stable but... ultrastable. That is, it acts selectively toward states of its internal variables and rejects those which lead to unstable states.”<sup>34</sup> But how can he verify a theory of behaviour, if a patterned behaviour is already assumed at the outset? When he finally moves to compare the balance of power system with the market-analogy, the analytical circle is completed.

The “balance of power” system in its ideal form is a system in which any combination of actors within alliances is possible so long as no alliance gains a marked preponderance in capabilities. The system tends to be maintained by the fact that even should any nation to desire to become preponderant itself, it must, to protect its own interests, act to prevent any other nation from accomplishing such an objective. Like Adam Smith’s “unseen hand” of competition, the international system is policed informally by self-interest, without the necessity of a political sub-system.<sup>35</sup>

In this analysis, the theory cannot be falsified by the patterned behaviour of the actors. First, we establish historically which were the rules that stabilised the system. Then, we make hypotheses as to why actors would follow them. Actors are assumed to be rational utility maximisers. If they do not conform to the rules, then they either act irrationally, or with wrong informations, and so on. Non-patterned behaviour will not falsify the economic approach, which is assumed, but the rationality of the individual actors. Hence, the research programme presages already the recent division of labour in IR: systemic approaches tell us the rational story. If there are puzzles, foreign policy analysis will explain them.

Hence, a scientific balance of power “theory” can be articulated. Given international anarchy, basic behavioural patterns can be expected from roughly rational actors. They

<sup>34</sup> Morton A. Kaplan, “Variants on Six Models of the International System”, p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> Morton A. Kaplan, “Variants on Six Models of the International System”, p. 296. For an earlier analysis of this analogy, see Ernst Haas, “The Balance of Power”, p. 455.

will share the motive of survival, and the procedure of self-help. This is the constant part of the analysis. Variables are the distribution of power, i.e. polarity. The explanandum is stability/instability.<sup>36</sup> Whereas Kaplan is more interested in the stability of the system as such, the polarity debate often treated stability as low conflict or even peace.<sup>37</sup> The analysis is concerned with deducing propositions from the distribution of power that have a particular impact on the rational calculus of the agents (powers, nations), which, in turn, renders the system stable or not. We get a causal account of the following kind: “if there is bipolarity (multipolarity), and given the micro-assumptions in an anarchical system, the effect on the rational calculus of actors will be patterned so that a high probability of stability (instability) results.” If it does not, the utilitarian model can explain it with reference to faulty behaviour of the rational actor.

In this scientific operationalisation of the security dilemma, power is the major policy aim, because it is still the key instrument for the provision of the permanently challenged security. Furthermore, on the basis of the drive for survival (security) and the distribution of power, scientific Realism tried to establish typologies and functional laws of international system. The removal of the drive for domination can be read as an attempt to give the Realist struggle for power more scientifically accessible fundamentals. In doing so, the concept of power loses its ontological status, not its central explanatory role.

## 2.2. The critique of power as central explanatory variable

Power has a double role. At the macro-level of analysis, its distribution characterises the particular international system which, in turn, explains some of the agent’s behaviour. At the micro-level, it replaces “money” in the utilitarian economic theory or rational choice. On both levels, the concept of power has been found not to meet the theoretical requirements.

### *The underdetermination of the distribution of power*

For Scientific Realists, anarchy and the resulting security dilemma are the basic characteristics for the articulation of their theory. More Classical Realists have criticised both.

The security dilemma has been repeatedly refined. This implies that structural constraints are considered to vary independently or prior to the assessment of the distribution of power. Kissinger, Aron and Wolfers present three different dichotomies.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the vague definition and narrow operationalisation of “stability”, see Patrick McCarthy, “Stability of Evolution, Evolution of Stability: Towards an Understanding of the Meaning of International Stability” (Florence: European University Institute, June Paper 1994), in particular pp. 33-40.

<sup>37</sup> In this respect, Waltz’s recent restatement is coming closer to Kaplan’s initial formulation. Here, the definition of stability is not twofold anymore, as in 1964. He drops “the peacefulness of adjustment” and keeps the “durability of the system itself”. See Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics”, *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1993), p. 45.

They all express dissatisfaction with the attempt to subsume all international relations under a power politics model.

Kissinger distinguishes between a *legitimate* and a *revolutionary* international order. The difference between the two systems has nothing to do with polarity, but with the existence of a shared code of conduct. “A legitimate order does not make conflicts impossible, but limits their scope. Wars may occur, but they will be fought *in the name* of the existing structure... Diplomacy in the classic sense, the adjustment of differences through negotiation, is possible only in ‘legitimate’ international orders.” In contrast, a “revolutionary” order always occurs, when one or more “powers” not only want adjustments within the system, as any revisionist actor, but an adjustment of the system itself.

But the distinguishing feature of a revolutionary power is not that it feels threatened — such feeling is inherent in the nature of international relations based on sovereign states — *but that nothing can reassure it*. Only absolute security — the neutralization of the opponent — is considered a sufficient guarantee, and thus the desire of one power for absolute security means absolute insecurity for all the others... Diplomacy, the art of restraining the exercise of power, cannot function in such an environment... And because in revolutionary situations the contending systems are less concerned with the adjustment of differences than with the subversion of loyalties, diplomacy is replaced either by war or by an armaments race.<sup>38</sup>

Within “the nature of international relations based on sovereign states” (without overarching authority), the feeling of insecurity and threat is considered inherent. Yet, only some specific orders display these features, as, for instance, the US-Soviet Union relations in the heyday of the Cold War. Others, as the Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century and the relations within the Common Market today are, in Aron’s words, a historical compromise between the state of nature and rule of law.<sup>39</sup>

Aron himself uses a similar distinction between “système homogène” and “système hétérogène”. Homogeneous systems are characterised by states of a similar kind and that share the same conception of politics. In contrast, heterogeneous systems are made up by states that are organised according to different principles and that endorse contradictory value-systems.<sup>40</sup>

Here Aron seems to imply a direct link between domestic and international policies. For Kissinger, different social systems can agree to settle their interstate relations following other rules than the domestic ones. This carries the public/private distinction of liberal domestic policies into the international realm.<sup>41</sup> In this distinction, everyone is allowed to pursue her own faith in the private realm and everyone is protected against the

<sup>38</sup> For the preceding quotes, see Henry A. Kissinger (1957) *A World Restored: The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Era* (London: Victor Gollantz, 1977), pp. 1-3.

<sup>39</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> For this point, see also Part I, chapter 2.

intrusion of the public realm: here, constitutional rights are equated with national sovereignty. Aron discusses the link between the domestic organisation of the political system and the nature of the resulting international system (this is the first part of his definition of heterogeneous systems). Yet, if one contextualises the quote within the book, then it ensues that different types of internal legitimation are no sufficient criterium for the derivation of a heterogeneous system. Before 1917, the heterogeneity of principles of (domestic) legitimacy was compatible with a profound cultural homogeneity of the European powers. It did not necessarily induce them to upset the international system.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, domestic heterogeneity is not even a necessary condition for a “revolutionary” or “heterogeneous” order.<sup>43</sup> The domestic system gives therefore only an *indication* of the resulting international order. Unreconcilable contradictory values, as they are pursued at the international level, seem to be the more important ingredient for the qualification of an international order. As a consequence, the distinction can be used to differentiate the international realm diachronically in different historical systems. It can also be synchronically applied to judge whether or not the “security dilemma” reigns in all subsystemic relations.

Arnold Wolfers is very explicit with regard to the theoretical implications of such distinctions. Wolfers himself distinguishes international orders according to a criterion of enmity/amity. The result is a continuum from a pole of power to a pole of indifference.

One consequence of distinctions such as these is worth mentioning. They rob theory of the determinate and predictive character that seemed to give the pure power hypothesis its peculiar value. It can now no longer be said of the actual world, for example, that a power vacuum cannot exist for any length of time; a vacuum surrounded by “satiated” or “*status quo*” states would remain as it is unless its existence were to change the character of these states and put them into the category of “imperialist”, “unsatiated”, or “dynamic” states.<sup>44</sup>

The result is that the concept of national security, the political correspondent to economic utility, cannot just be derived from the alleged necessities of international anarchy. At the pole of indifference, where no amount of opportunity for successful attack could induce a state to undertake it, “nothing could do more to undermine security... than to start accumulating power of a kind that would provoke fear and countermoves.”<sup>45</sup> If the utility function is security, the national interest cannot be necessarily expressed in terms of power. “After all that has been said little is left of the sweeping generalization that in

<sup>42</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 112, describes as perhaps the most frightening heterogeneity the one which develops out of a basic community.

<sup>44</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 86. At another point, Wolfers seems, however, to accept the idea of an “automatism” in the tendency towards equilibrium. See p. 123. But this can coherently only apply to the pole of power politics.

<sup>45</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p. 160.

actual practice nations, guided by their national security interest, tend to pursue a uniform and therefore imitable policy of security.”<sup>46</sup>

*The economics vs. the (historical) sociology of IR*

The analogy with the neo-classical market-model is the basic thrust of the scientist critique. Raymond Aron made a very explicit attempt to attack the approach by which the national interest would replace utility in an economic function. Since I believe that many of his arguments are still valid, I will develop them in some detail.

First, he considers “power” as too ambiguous an end to found an economic approach. If power is treated as the main foreign policy goal which allows the rationalist articulation of the theory, then the definition of power becomes crucial. Yet, Aron finds three different definitions, none of which able to carry this explanatory weight. Neither “power-as-resource”, nor “power-as-force”, i.e. of actually mobilised resources, nor finally “power-as-coercive capacity” can encompass or synthesise all foreign policy goals. Aron develops instead a triad of foreign policy goals: power (*puissance*), security and glory/ideals. Neither is it possible to reduce foreign policy behaviour to one of the three, nor is the quest for power or security a behaviour which all diplomats *should* share. In view of the plurality of foreign policy goals which can be subordinated rationally to more contingent and various historical goals, the “national interest” cannot be “rationally” defined.

Certains théoriciens ont voulu trouver, pour les relations internationales, l'équivalent de la fin rationnelle du sport ou de l'économie. Un seul but, la victoire, s'écrit le général naïf, oubliant que la victoire militaire donne toujours des satisfactions d'amour-propre, mais non toujours des bénéfices politiques. Un seul impératif, *l'intérêt national*, proclame solennellement un théoricien, à peine moins naïf que le général, comme s'il suffisait d'accrocher l'adjectif national au concept d'intérêt pour rendre celui-ci univoque...., faute d'objectif univoque de la conduite diplomatique, l'analyse rationnelle des relations internationales n'est pas en mesure de se développer en théorie globale.<sup>47</sup>

The second reason for which Aron refuses to use an economic approach to IR is again linked to power as a central explanatory concept. Power is not as fungible as money.<sup>48</sup> This implies that power within one issue area is not necessarily convertible in another. An atomic threat might not necessarily be useful for inducing another state to sign a convention on environmental matters.

Aron admits, that economists cannot exactly know all the particular preferences of the economic actors. Yet, they are able to reduce the multitude of preferences to one utility function. They can do so because of the existence of money, the universal standard of

<sup>46</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*., p. 156.

<sup>47</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>48</sup> The term “fungibility” refers to the idea of a moveable good that can be freely placed and replaced by another of the same class. It connotes universal applicability or “convertibility” in contrast to context specificity.

value and universal means for the acquisition of goods. Such a measure does not exist in politics. This is not a difference in degree, but in kind. The underlying argument is that there is an empirical difference between money and power which makes it impossible to model political science explanations by substituting utility for national interest and money for power. For Aron, the invention of money revolutionised real world economy and allowed economists to model marginal economics. Only because there is a market economy based on money can neo-classical economic theory be used. There is nothing within (real world) politics which can take the place of money.

After this undermining of the micro foundations, Aron consequently dismisses any “scientific” claim of the macro level, the balance of power. Since power is no unequivocal foreign policy goal, it cannot stand for the basic drive to survive. The only notion of “equilibrium” that Aron accepts, is the individual’s search not to be dependent on others.<sup>49</sup> Thus, there is no clear-cut behavioural pattern for international actors, because this drive can be filled in many ways irreducible to one concept. The two conditions of the distribution of power and the individual drive for survival are neither sufficient to elaborate a model for the functioning and evolution of the international system.<sup>50</sup>

The possible theorisation is, therefore, limited to a framework of analysis that justifies the focus and selection of certain variables considered significant and the apprehension or *understanding* of a particular historical constellations of world politics.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Aron argues for an approach based on a Weberian historical sociology. He attacks the particular attempt to reduce the theoretical study of IR to a rearticulation of positivist (deductive-nomological) neo-classical economics. He does not, however, deny its role (among others) in an intentionalist framework for understanding meaningful action.

Si la conduite diplomatique n’est jamais déterminé par le seul rapport de forces, si la puissance n’est pas l’enjeu de la diplomatie comme l’utilité celle de l’économie, alors la conclusion est légitime qu’il n’y a pas de théorie générale des relations internationales, comparable à la théorie générale de l’économie. La théorie que nous sommes en train d’esquisser tend à analyser le sens de la conduite diplomatique, à dégager les notions fondamentales, à préciser les variables qu’il faut passer en revue pour comprendre une constellation. Mais elle ne suggère pas une “diplomatie éternelle”, elle ne prétend pas à la reconstruction d’un système clos.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Conclusion: The aims and limits of “power” in Realist explanations

Compared with the ambitious theoretical programme, that scientific Realism reserved for the concept of power, the precedent power debate has revealed a rather more limited role. This is compatible with one side in Morgenthau’s original approach. It is also coherent

<sup>49</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 154.

<sup>50</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 154.

<sup>51</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 140.

<sup>52</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 102.

with the English School of IR, which used the balance of power as one particular institution of “international society” which is neither characterised by universal dominion, nor by universal anarchy. Martin Wight might be at times be read as to imply that the balance of power is the logical outcome of an international system without government.<sup>53</sup> For Hedley Bull, there is no mechanism whereby states will automatically seek to prevent one state from becoming preponderant. In the multitude of different policy aims, not all states seek at all time to maximise their relative power position. A balance of power is understood as the attempt to avoid hegemony, as a condition for the preservation of international order.<sup>54</sup> It is at best a maxim, not a law.

This notwithstanding, the concept of power or of balance of power has not ceased to figure prominently in IR explanations. In fact, the debate pursued largely unchanged. The balance of power was still used as a “theory” which assumes that the universal survival motive, under the conditions of the balance of power in international anarchy, produces a behaviour which is conducive to the reproduction of the balance of power.<sup>55</sup>

If conceptual and theoretical problems are crucial and not resolved, they can be expected to regularly resurrect. The next chapters will show how they do. Let us just take stock of all the puzzles and insufficiencies of power for a scientific explanation.

First, the international realm is not a form of pure anarchy, nor is it uniformly characterised by the security dilemma. Hence the distribution of power cannot be causally linked to actor’s behaviour. It is, instead, part of the context within which actor’s make sense of the environment. When A increases in power, this does not mechanically or causally induce a response, but is part of the interpretation that B will make of A’s intentions. These intentions are important for understanding the response.

Second, power does not provide a shorthand for subsuming all the foreign policy goals of a state. This includes those sentences where power is the necessary immediate, or the ultimate, aim, or any other theoretical safeguard of the kind. If security is understood in terms of power, the same applies to security. The pursuit of power is one possible political action among others.

Third, power cannot take the place of money to allow for an economic theorisation of politics. This implies that the market-analogy is at best a metaphor. One cannot use neo-classical economics, or a covering law model for political explanations, if power should provide the basic explanatory concept.<sup>56</sup> Power can be, however, part of an intentionalist account.

<sup>53</sup> “And so long as the absence of international government means that powers are primarily occupied with their survival, so long will they seek to maintain some kind of balance between them...” (Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power”, p. 184.)

<sup>54</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 111-112.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz (1967) “International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of World Power”, in James Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 304.

<sup>56</sup> Here, the argument joins the result of the conceptual discussion in chapter 3.2.



## 5

### Relational Power and Causal Analysis in Neorealism



As a reaction to the previously mentioned criticism, researchers in IR have either carefully avoided the concept of power<sup>1</sup> or tried to state specific power links and measure the means more rigorously. It is in this context that we must see the two prominent conceptualisations of power in IR, that both use a choice-theoretical approach. This is done not by Waltz, who leaves the concept unchanged, but by Baldwin, Keohane and Nye.

Hence, the present chapter is not primarily based on Waltz for understanding Neorealist power analysis. This is not done with the purpose of attaching possibly uncomfortable label to writers who do not conceive of themselves as Neorealists. To the contrary, it is rather meant to honour the attempts to reformulate this elusive concept and to make it useable for analysis. What all these approaches have in common, which justifies the use of a common label “Neorealism”, is the systematic use of an economic mode of explanation in IR. This implies both (1) the Waltzian use of *market theory* and (2) the *rational actor model* used in the game-theoretical approach and most prominently by Keohane and Nye’s later research program. It is on this ground that insights from the traditional realist and liberal traditions have been recently integrated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Rosenau distinguishes between “capabilities” as a property concept, and “control” as actual influence over outcomes. See his 1976 essay “Capabilities and Control in an Interdependent World,” in his book *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on the Transnationalization of World Affairs* (London: Frances Pinter, 1980), pp. 35-52.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Power and Interdependence Revisited,” *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987), pp. 725-53. In particular see p. 729, wherein Keohane and Nye explicitly subsume liberalism and realism under a *rational actor model* but with different conceptions of the nature of environment and other actor’s goals. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Neorealism and Neoliberalism”, *World Politics*, vol. 40, no. 2 (January 1988), pp. 235-51; and, explicitly, Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Two Approaches”, in Robert Keohane (1987) *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 158-79. For the purpose of this argument, only the neoinstitutionalist and regime approaches that use an economic mode of explanation can be criticised accordingly.

Baldwin attempts systematically to import the findings of the power literature in political theory into IR. Keohane and Nye explore the limits of traditional power analysis in the context of transnationalisation. Even though Baldwin criticises their use of the concept of interdependence, these two influential reworkings of the concept have many crucial points in common. Both approaches take a choice-theoretical model as their underlying methodological starting point. Both are aware of the above-mentioned tautology, which derives from defining power in terms of resources. Both stress the importance of apprehending power resources only after a careful contextual analysis that Keohane and Nye subsume under “asymmetrical interdependency”. Finally, both emphasise the need to specify the context, that is, the issue areas (and possibly also regimes) from which “vulnerability”, resources and thus potential power derive. For instance, military resources are not necessarily useful when employed in a financial context. As a result, they propose a choice-theoretical power analysis that focuses on specific “bargains” and the *translation process from unequally fungible agent resources, which derive from particular contexts (interdependence), via strategic interaction to influence over outcomes*. Whereas this approach implicitly replies to some of Aron’s power puzzles, it still tries to uphold a causal and economistic approach to IR explanations.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. The economistic approach to power in IR revisited

Kenneth N. Waltz has resurrected a scientific approach to IR in his *Theory of International Politics*.<sup>4</sup> His solution is, in fact, the most radical. Not only is balance of power enshrined as a “theory”, indeed the only theory IR ever had, but the study of IR can delegate domestic policies, foreign policy decision-making to another discipline, political science. The discipline found its identity reaffirmed and its self-esteem bolstered.

His approach is called “structural” Realism, because his theory builds up explanations where variance at the systemic level, from bi- to multipolarity, for instance, is said to explain unit-level behaviour. Waltz adopts neo-classical micro-economics as the theory on which to model International Theory. Again, the balance of power explains unit-level behaviour, or, at least, sets the range of possible or feasible actions. “Balance-of-power theory is microtheory precisely in the economist’s sense. The system, like a market in economics, is made by the actions and interactions of its units, and the theory is based on assumptions about their behavior.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For good presentations of an economistic approach to power in political theory, which provide the background of the following discussion with regard to IR, see Brian Barry (1975), “Power: An Economic Analysis”, reprinted in Brian Barry, *Democracy, Power, and Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 222-269; Jean Baechler, *Le Pouvoir Pur* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1978); Randall Bartlett, *Economics and Power: An Inquiry into Human Relations and Markets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Keith M. Dowding, *Rational Choice and Political Power*.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Readings: Addison Wesley, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz (1979) “Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power”, in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 117.

This implies the usual link between the drive for survival and the maximisation of power — and all the problems mentioned in the last chapter. One of the major problems for the assessment of the distribution of power lies in power's lacking fungibility. If power is not fungible between, say, the military, economic, and technological realm, how are we to rank and assess "powers"?

Classical Realists knew about this problem, as well. If power is segmented, if the relative importance of all these capacities is uncertain and changing, then the positioning of power seems very approximative. After having acknowledged the problem of assessing "over-all" power, Bull comes to an astonishing conclusion: "But the relative position of states in terms of over-all power nevertheless makes itself apparent in bargaining among states, and the conception of over-all power is one we cannot do without."<sup>6</sup>

This is particularly true for all those who believe in the explanatory value of the balance of power. But they cannot, like Bull, derive it just by saying that we can see it and that we need it. The first answer comes close to the usual power tautologies, i.e. to derive power from its effects: the one who wins in a bargain is the most powerful. Yet, we need to assess power *before* the contest to make it a predictive tool. The second answer is, of course, true, but irrelevant for an economic explanation. Yet, it is exactly the same as Waltz uses to confirm a overall-concept of power

A system theory requires one to define structures partly by the distribution of capabilities across units. States, because they are in a self-help system, have to use their combined capabilities in order to serve their interests. The economic, military, and other capabilities of nations cannot be sectorised and separately weighed.<sup>7</sup>

Raymond Aron's attack on fungibility, at the time levelled against Kaplan, is now repeated against Waltz. Robert Keohane argues that the "power assumption" of Waltz' Neorealism cannot hold. In a systemic theory, power resources are held to be homogeneous and fungible, like money in economics, to allow for parsimonious predictions. This seems hardly applicable on an overall-power structure. He, therefore, represents the idea of using it within particular issue-areas.<sup>8</sup> Attacked on the ground that power cannot, even if we need it, provide such a measure for its lacking fungibility, Waltz says that

Obviously, power is not as fungible as money. Not much is. But power is much more fungible than Keohane allows. As ever, the distinction between strong and weak states is important. The stronger the state, the greater the variety of its capabilities. Power may be only slightly fungible for weak states, but it is highly so for strong ones.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 131.

<sup>8</sup> Robert O. Keohane (1983) "Theory of World Politics. Structural Realism and Beyond", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 167, 184-86.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "A Response to my Critics", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 333.

This argument is not clear. If power is so fungible, then it can be assumed to be used in different scopes. This is independent from the fact that the state is strong or weak. By assuming a variety of capabilities (economic, political, and so on), Waltz seems rather to imply that a strong state is strong, not because it has various sources of power, but because it possesses many capabilities in most important scopes.<sup>10</sup> This idea of over-all power comes close to what Morriss has called “set of compossible actions”.<sup>11</sup> Morriss’ idea is that “over-all power” consists in the set of actions that an actor can effect at one point in time *in different scopes*. Of course, weak actors can win one contest by concentrating all their power on one point. But the over-all power could be only understood by counterfactually asking how many contests could be won at the same time.

Yet, this over-all power does not rely on an assumption of fungibility. Indeed, it conceives generalised power rankings as something close to meaningless. One would need to have a measure for ranking different capabilities across scopes, as fungibility implies.<sup>12</sup> More generally, this means, that after the assessment of the sets of compossible actions, the comparison of over-all power is determined by the basic theory on which certain outcomes can be considered more important, than others.<sup>13</sup> The consequence is that the comparison of over-all power is dependent on a theory which attributes importance to different scopes.

Hence for those who want to operationalise concepts of power, power analysis implies the choice of one (middle-range) social theory rather than another. Aron chooses a Weberian approach, Waltz chooses the economic approach. In Waltz’ late response to Aron, he reduces the power-money analogy to a problem of measurement, not of theorisation.<sup>14</sup> Despite the appearances, the debate is essentially about very different assumptions of an individualist approach. If one assumes a rational choice framework, like neo-classical economics, then the national interest is analogous to utility. In this case, there must be an analogy between power and money, as incomplete as it may. Denying this analogy would imply to give up the neo-classical mode of explanation. Thus, Waltz must, in order to be internally coherent, assume that the power-money analogy is just a problem of measurement. Aron argues that power does not empirically and cannot theoretically play the same role as money. Indeed, he claims, to use rational choice

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 29-35, stresses that scope and domain cannot be rigorously weighted.

<sup>13</sup> For a similar point, see David A. Baldwin, “Neoliberalism, Neorealism, and World Politics”, in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory”, *Journal of International Affairs* (London), vol. 44 (Summer 1990), pp. 21-38. In the light of this explicit discussion of the money-power analogy, he seems to imply an economic theory of power maximisation. For a critique of this assumption, see Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 55.

terminology, that foreign policy aims are incommensurable in the real world.<sup>15</sup> Here it is certainly not just a question of measurement.

Therefore, Waltz has not improved on former power concepts or made a convincing case for modelling IR theory on neo-classical economics. Indeed, he does not take much issue with the power debate in IR. Here, in particular David A. Baldwin has tried to solve some of the conceptual problems of IR power analysis. His studies stand out as the most rigorous attempt to bring order into the use of power in IR. In many respects they are not incompatible with Waltz. Indeed, as the following two sections try to argue, Baldwin, Keohane and Nye provide a necessary corrective and improvement on Neorealism.

## 2. David Baldwin's concept and assessment of power

... a single monolithic international "power structure"... implies either highly fungible power resources or a single dominant issue area... 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.

David Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power*, pp. 166-167.

### 2.1. Power - a causal and relational concept

Baldwin accepts a causal notion of power in which the "power wielder affects the behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, or propensity to act of another actors."<sup>16</sup> This implies a relatively wide notion of "causally induced change" which is similar to Nagel's and Oppenheim's approach.<sup>17</sup> Baldwin uses a causal concept of power of to get rid of the well-known tautologies that hamper power analysis in the social sciences. As for Morriss, an ability or, as Baldwin calls it, *potential power*, implies already an assessment that potentially the control of these resources can effect an action (Morriss), or causally affect someone else (Baldwin). Causality is here used to distinguish between undertakings and outcomes.

Baldwin targets two tautologies. One cannot explain variations in the distribution of potential power by variations in the distribution of resources, because the assessment of resources as *power* resources implies already an assessment of their quality to influence others. A non-tautological use would link variations in the resources with variations in actual power, i.e. variations in actually affecting someone else.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, it would be a tautology to derive the affected outcome from variations in actual power. Indeed, changes in actual power implies changes in outcomes. Therefore, those who say that an influence attempt fails, cannot at the same time argue that this attempt relied on actual

<sup>15</sup> Rational choice theory accepts indeterminacy based on incommensurability of alternative options as one of those situations where it cannot be applied for explanatory purposes. See Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 31-33.

<sup>16</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> See also David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 207.

power. Baldwin follows Lasswell and Kaplan to the extent that a power base “refers to the causal condition that gives influence its effectiveness. Thus, by definition, ineffective influence attempts cannot employ ‘influence bases’.”<sup>19</sup>

The description of policy options and the description of the causal condition(s) of success are best kept separate if one wants to understand how techniques of statecraft work. In sum, policy instruments used to make influence attempts should be described in ways that imply nothing whatever about either the probability of success or the causal condition of success. Trying is one thing; succeeding is another.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas power refers to the causal conditions for a successful influence attempt (outcome), policy instruments (resources in the general sense) refer to non-causal conditions for an action of undetermined nature; it could be an influence attempt, which *can* have a causal effect.

This is a different solution to the circularity problem of power-outcomes, that we have already met. Those who stick to a dispositional concept of power, where causality is not part of the definition, make a link between power and *outputs*, not outcomes. Indeterminacy comes at the level of social interaction. Baldwin, to the contrary, keeps a causal concept of power, but includes a variety of social factors in the assessment of actual power. Here, the link between power and outcome is causal, but the assessment of power is indeterminate. Whereas a dispositional conceptualisation can wait for the relational character of power resources to be included at the operational level, Baldwin, given his causal approach, needs to include the relational character already in the definition.

Baldwin strongly defends a *relational* approach to the analysis of power.<sup>21</sup> In this approach, a power base or power resource cannot be assessed by sole reference to the power holder. Baldwin’s example is a coercive attempt in which a person threatens another with a gun and shouts “your money or your life”. The sanction of killing and the visible means for realising it generally provide a powerful threat. Yet, if the threatened person is preparing to commit suicide, or does not value life so highly, the coercive capacity of the threat is reduced accordingly. Awareness of this relational aspect can also be consciously used as a defense against threats. President Harry Truman tried to impress President Joseph Stalin in Potsdam in 1945 by telling him that the United States had developed an atomic bomb. Stalin, however, by feigning indifference, reduced the impact of this possible bargaining chip. Thus, any power instrument becomes a potential power

<sup>19</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> This should not be confounded with a “relative” concept of power. For this confusion, see William B. Moul, “Measuring the ‘balances of power’: a look at some numbers”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 1989), p. 102. Although carefully arguing for a disaggregated concept of power, the same confusion is found in Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy*, p. 68.

resource only if its control is valued by other actors in the interaction. Power comes out of this relation, not from the power holder alone.<sup>22</sup>

For the relational approach to power, Baldwin refuses a complete money-power analogy where power is simply treated as a resource to be exchanged in an interaction for actual influence. The rejection of this analogy marks the three major elements of Baldwin's power analysis: the concept of fungibility, the multidimensional character of power, and the prior relational analysis of specific policy-contingency frameworks.<sup>23</sup>

The high *fungibility* of money rests upon two main characteristics: first, its high liquidity as a medium of exchange based and dependent on, second, its function as a standard of value.<sup>24</sup> Yet, for Baldwin:

The owner of a political power resource, such as the means to deter atomic attack, is likely to have difficulties converting this resource into another resource 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 standardised measure of value that serves as medium of exchange for political power resources.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time power is *multidimensional*, i.e. its scope (the objectives of an attempt to gain influence, the issue over which influence is to be gained), its domain (the target of the influence attempt), its weight (the quantity of resources) and its cost (opportunity costs of forgoing a relation) must be made explicit.<sup>26</sup> Without these qualifications, any statement about power is, for Baldwin, close to meaningless. Another consequence of low fungibility is that power can rest on various bases, and no single power base (military resources, for instance) can be held a priori to be the most decisive in any attempt to exert influence.

This multidimensional character leads us to the last characteristic of any power approach in Baldwin's terms: the specification of the situation, that is, the *policy-contingency framework*.<sup>27</sup> At this point, the inextricable link between the economic approach's

<sup>22</sup> For this particular point, see David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 22; and his 1980 essay "Interdependence and Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> The term "*fungibility*" refers to the idea of movable goods that can be freely placed and replaced by another of the same class. It connotes universal applicability or "convertibility" in contrast to context specificity.

<sup>24</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power*, pp. 25, 209. For a similar argument, see Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 134.

<sup>26</sup> The inclusion of opportunity costs is a result of Baldwin's reception of the social exchange literature. For an early statement, see David A. Baldwin (1971) "The Costs of Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> For a very similar approach, that starts out with the intention to retain a dispositional concept of power (an ability), but by acknowledging the question of fungibility ends up with integrating specific relations and contexts into the account of power bases, see Kjell Goldmann, "The International Power Structure: Traditional Theory and New Reality", in Kjell Goldmann and Gunnar Sjöstedt (eds), *Power, Capabilities, Interdependence. Problems in the Study of International Influence* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications), pp. 7-36.

two levels can be shown. For the agent, this policy-contingency framework corresponds to the structural level of an economic approach. Only by analysing the particular market on which (economic) actors meet is a precise assessment of the interaction possible.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, agents' behaviour in the long run shapes the underlying structure that constrains future actions.

In other words, a relational concept of power requires necessarily a prior contextual analysis.<sup>29</sup> This contextual analysis includes also an assessment of *societal norms*. This results from the fact that exchange is possible not only in money economies, but also in situations of barter. Therefore, the analogy of barter exchange and power relations is theoretically possible.<sup>30</sup> Barter, in turn, can work because "societal norms function as *primitive* measuring rods that make indirect social exchange possible."<sup>31</sup>

The resulting power analysis starts from the assessment of resources or policy instruments. Since high fungibility cannot be assumed, potential power (within particular scopes) can only be assessed after a situational analysis which specifies the different dimensions of the context. This potential power might, for lack of will or desire, not be translated into actual power.<sup>32</sup> Only this actual power is causally linked to the explanation of the outcome (see Figure 4.2). Since norms are necessary to assess power, it is implicit in this approach that a power attempt can be *directly* affecting the outcome, or *indirectly* affecting the context to affect the outcome. These are the two main targets for influence attempts and for power-based policy analysis. Yet, to do such an analysis, the concept of power must be supplemented by a theoretical framework. Neorealism uses theoretical frameworks inspired by neo-classical economic theory.

## 2.2. The counterfactual assessment of power

Baldwin seems inclined to accept the positivist standards for research generally linked to behavioural approaches. He quotes empirical tests and falsification as a standard for scientific inquiry.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he stresses the need of counterfactual conditions which are not easily handled by empiricist approaches.<sup>34</sup> Counterfactual reasoning is necessarily theoretical. Theoretical hypothesis or frameworks of analysis will provide the

<sup>28</sup> As we will elaborate in the next section, Baldwin's multidimensional context rather resembles Keohane and Nye's issue areas or regimes, than the general Waltzian structure.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 285.

<sup>30</sup> See also Roderick Martin, *The Sociology of Power* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Power and Social Exchange", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 125. That societal norms are necessary to make barter/power work, means that the effect of power is socially constructed. This argument will be taken up in the next chapter.

<sup>32</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>33</sup> He defends Sir Norman Angell for advancing an empirically testable proposition, which might not be true, but is, in principle, falsifiable. He also dismisses dependency approaches for their partial precluding of empirical investigation. See David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 185, and p. 213, fn. 136.

<sup>34</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 212.



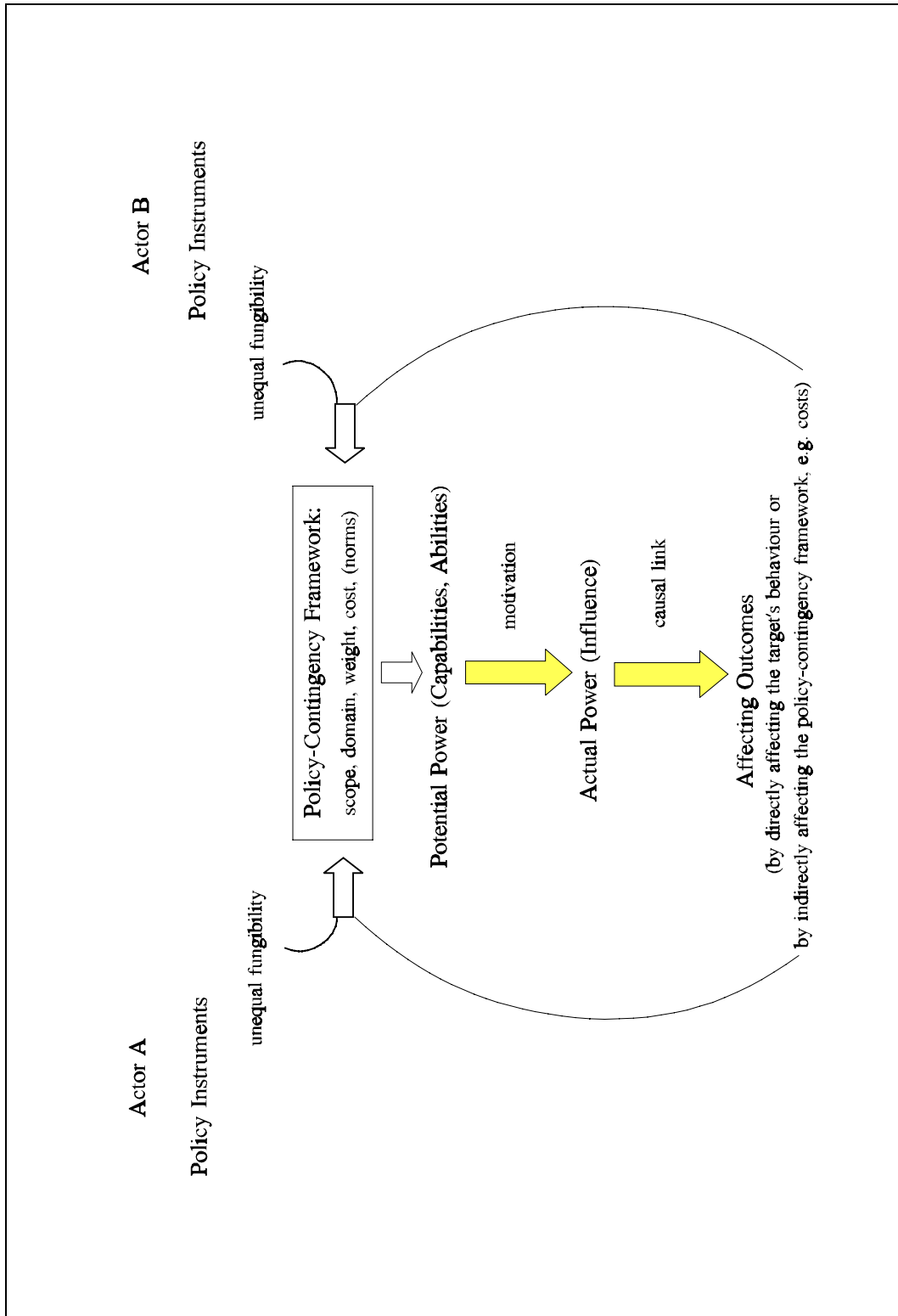


Figure 4.2 An analytical model of David Baldwin's relational power analysis

step from the definition to the assessment of power.

Two examples can serve to illustrate the point, namely Baldwin's discussions of the Peloponnesian War and the US embargo against Japan before Pearl Harbour. Here, these counterfactuals become extremely important for the judgement of the success of influence attempts, i.e. for the empirical analysis of power relations.

Deterrence via economic sanctions did not work during the Peloponnesian War. "Although Pericles's action failed to deter war, the probability of war was fairly great to begin with; and perhaps nothing he could have done would have avoided it. Given the tense and complex situation, the imposition of economic sanctions may well have been the policy option with the highest probability of success."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the probability of war is crucial for assessing the success of the US embargo against Japan. "If it is estimated as low, then the argument that an embargo was an unnecessarily provocative act carries more weight; but if it is estimated as high, the embargo seems more attractive..."<sup>36</sup>

In this context, a theory of the behaviour of states becomes necessary, before one is able to judge influence attempts. If, for example, one relies on Kagan's interpretation of Thucydides, that "war was inevitable from the time Athens became an imperial power",<sup>37</sup> then the traditional Realist dictum of the inevitability of conflict as a result of shifts in the balance of power becomes the logic on which counterfactuals are build.

The theoretical assumptions of the writer becomes the base or the logical thrust for expectations and probabilities with which actual behaviour will be compared. This, however, is exactly what Pluralists had criticised in the power studies of "stratification theory". Hence, Baldwin seems less empiricist than the classical Pluralist approach:

*Power analysis always requires consideration of counterfactual conditions.* If power relations involve some people getting other people to do something they would not otherwise do, the question of *what would otherwise have been done* cannot be ignored... Such discussion may amount to little more than "educated guesses", but this is preferable to ignoring the problem.<sup>38</sup>

Baldwin does not claim to provide a power *theory*, but just a conceptual analysis of power that can be made useful in empirical research. The approach is close to Oppenheim's (see chapter 3). Yet, Baldwin's approach is very demanding on the empirical research design.

On the one hand, his analysis, by being based on counterfactuals of non-empirically verifiable actions, and puts an enormous weight on theoretical assumptions about how social relations work.<sup>39</sup> Baldwin is very (rightly) critical of attempts to explain away the

<sup>35</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 169.

<sup>37</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 151.

<sup>38</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> There would be the possibility of resolving it in a Weberian approach, or to limit power to the explanations of outputs, not outcomes. But then the causal analogy would have to give way to a dispositional concept in which power analysis could only help to understand *ex post* how particular outcomes happened.

“paradox of unrealised power”, which became prominent in US writings during and after Vietnam. He wants to keep the central explanatory weight of power *and* to avoid anything that could be a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* argument. Baldwin insists on the possibility of testing which implies the establishment of power bases *before* the influence attempt, and this assessment of power is necessarily counterfactual.

On the other hand, he uses a causal concept of power to explain outcomes. As a result, in this operationalisation, predictions about the impact of power can fail, because the power scholar did not use a relational concept of power where the very definition of a power base depends on a counterfactual assessment of its efficiency within a particular “policy-contingency” framework. This imposes an extraordinary effort on the side of the researcher. Unsuccessful power analysis is possible, not because “power” does not control outcomes, but because researchers were mistaken in their counterfactual analysis. Power bases cannot fail; power scholars do.

Here the degree of fungibility is again crucial. If “we defined each issue as existing within a unique ‘policy-contingency framework,’ no generalizations would be possible.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, we cannot exactly know, and certainly not beforehand, how unique the particular framework is. It is here where Keohane and Nye’s models and theoretical assumptions supplement Baldwin’s power approach as simplifying *assumptions* about the international system.

### 3. The assessment of power under different models of the international system

The concept of power requires a theoretical framework to make explanations. Neorealism offers an approach which is modelled on the economic mode of explanation. Yet, as we have seen, Baldwin severely qualifies the analogy between national interest and utility and between power and money. Whereas Waltz’ approach tends to include these items on the empirical stage of analysis, Baldwin is convincingly arguing for including them at the conceptual and theoretical stage. Keohane and Nye’s framework supplements his conceptual approach to power with a more general framework of analysis. This framework might not aspire to be a theory like Waltz’, but, in fact, it might have more explanatory value than the latter’s. This section is devoted to explicating this approach.<sup>41</sup>

There is no tautology, because power does not explain the outcome.

<sup>40</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “Theory of World Politics”, p. 187.

<sup>41</sup> After the previous discussion, it should be clear that Neorealism is not confined to Waltz, nor does it imply a derogatory meaning. It refers to the “Neorealism-Neoliberalism” debate which takes place on the common ground of rational choice explanations. This debate is seen in terms of complementarity, like the realist-idealist debate. In both cases, the most convincing Realists, like Aron, Bull, Claude, Herz, or Wolfers for the first or Baldwin, Keohane and Nye for the second, were those who criticised their more materialistically deterministic or monocausal fellows. David A. Baldwin, “Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and World Politics”, p. 24, sees such a synthesis delineating, but does not, unlike the present study, use a unique label.

### 3.1. The international system: another continuum between Complex Interdependence and Realism

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye developed what they called the “World Politics Paradigm”. Here, they argued that a purely state-centric paradigm is inadequate and set out a research programme in which transnational relations “affect interstate politics by altering the choices open to states men and the costs that must be borne for adopting various courses of action”.<sup>42</sup> They also stress a split of World Politics into different issue-areas which the study of IR has to explore and to integrate by inspecting the linkages.<sup>43</sup> In their following work, this approach will be explored. As a result they articulate an approach which is different from Realism, but which aims at *including* it. Indeed, they present a dichotomy which, in several respects, restates Kissinger’s, Aron’s or Wolfers’. Quite consequently the exposition of their approach starts by redefining Realism’s central concept, power.

They define power in relation with “interdependence”. Whereas “sensitivity” independence assumes responsiveness within a given policy framework, the “vulnerability dimension of interdependence rests on the relative availability and costliness of the alternatives, that various actors face.”<sup>44</sup> The latter is more important. It includes a strategic component and focuses on the possible changes of the underlying rules of the game. Whenever there exist asymmetrical interdependencies between actors, they provide sources for power.

Hence, their concept, by being tied to interdependencies, is a relational concept. Moreover, they define two different power relations. Is only the sensitivity dimension is activated, then we are in a direct influence attempt. Actors can, however, also try to change the underlying rules of the game and thereby indirectly influence the outcome. In both cases, the actual outcome is not explained by these relational capabilities. Thus, the basic structure of the argument is the following: relational (potential) power deriving from interdependencies (in different issue areas) → translation: bargaining process → influence over outcomes.

If one set of rules puts an actor in a disadvantageous position, that actor will probably try to change those rules if it can do so at a reasonable cost. Thus *influence deriving from favourable asymmetries in sensitivity is very limited when the underlying asymmetries in vulnerability are unfavourable*. Asymmetrical interdependence by itself cannot explain bargaining outcomes, even in traditional relations among states. As we said earlier, *power measured in terms of resources or potential may look different from power measured in terms of influence over outcomes*. We must look at the ‘translation’ in the political bargaining process.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Conclusion”, in their edited *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 374.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>44</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, jr., *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, p. 18.

This translation will happen in different environments. They distinguish between the conditions of Realism and of “Complex Interdependence”. For our purpose important distinctions regard actor’s goals and means. In the first, military security is most important, and the balance of power the main political instrument. In the latter, the goals of states will vary by issue area. Power resources specific to issue areas will be most relevant.<sup>46</sup> Whereas Realist explanations are most suitable for the first case, the “International Organization Model” (IOM) assumes “that a set of networks, norms, and institutions, once established will be difficult either to eradicate or dramatically to rearrange”<sup>47</sup> and are therefore close to Keohane’s later functionalist account of “regimes”.<sup>48</sup> In other words, fungibility is supposed to apply more in the Realist context, and less in Complex Interdependence. To assess the impact of the distribution of power across issue areas one therefore need *a priori* to know in which context the relations are set.

To judge from the texts, both writers never claimed to *replace*, but only to *supplement* Realism. They explicitly caution about the use of the IOM, which, even under conditions of complex interdependence, could be rendered invalid.<sup>49</sup>

The validity of the model depends on its assumptions that actors will not destroy the regime by attempting to take advantage of one another’s vulnerability interdependence. If, on the contrary, this occurs, underlying power resources within issue areas or overall will once again become most important, and structural models will be better guides than the International Organization Model to regime change. The two structural models therefore dominate the International Organization Model in the same way that vulnerability interdependence dominates sensitivity interdependence as a power resource.<sup>50</sup>

Complex Interdependence and Realism become, hence, the renewed dichotomy to differentiate the international system which does only partly follows the security dilemma.<sup>51</sup> In this reformulation, the establishment of issue-structures within which conventional Realism might apply, stresses the lack of fungibility across issue-structures, rather than within it. This is an attempt to rescue the central explanatory value of the concept of power - by

<sup>46</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, p. 55.

<sup>48</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>49</sup> See also their argument in “*Power and Interdependence Revisited*”, pp. 728-29.

<sup>50</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>51</sup> It might be interesting to show the similarities with Aron’s homogeneous and heterogeneous systems. Following Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, pp. 108-109, homogeneous systems are characterised by: (1) greater stability: the governments do not ignore the interests that unite them in spite of some national interests which might oppose them; (2) a moderation of violence; (3) a greater previsibility, and (4) a distinction between political adversary and national enemy: interstate hostility does not exclude reconciliation and later treaties. In a homogenous system, the international code of conduct disciplines the actors till the moment, where the disruption of the system would cause them less harm than the prolongation of the order. This system comes to an end if one of the actors feels oppressed, and/or translates different domestic value systems to the international level and/or develops so much power that she wants to change the order.

limiting (and defining a priori) the scope in issue-structures. The relation between Realism and CI is hence dominantly Realist. CI can only apply where the actors stick to the rules and do not try to change the regime.

### 3.2. Economic rational choice as causal analysis

This implies a synthesis between Realism and Liberalism which strips it of its predictive capacities. Yet, although in later works, Keohane makes such arguments, he seems to stick to an economic and not sociological conception of meaningful action.<sup>52</sup>

On the systemic level, Keohane argues for keeping the logical priority of the international structure as the starting point for international explanations. Yet, he does not imbue it with causal properties. When he discusses Hegemonic Stability Theory, he shows empirical anomalies of the crude version, which derives the existence of regimes solely from shifts in the distribution of power. A more sophisticated version needs to rely on an aspect of the unit-level, namely leadership. Whereas the first approach is a causal explanation, the second is “a way of describing an international system in which leadership is exercised by a single state. Rather than being a component of a scientific generalization — that power is necessary or sufficient condition for cooperation — the concept of hegemony, defined in terms of willingness as an ability to lead, helps us to think about the incentives facing the potential hegemon.”<sup>53</sup>

On the unit-level he relaxes the power - maximisation assumption following Wolfers' and Baldwin's already-mentioned points.<sup>54</sup> Inscribed in an explanatory scheme, institutions become intervening factors between the distribution of power and interests, and state behaviour.<sup>55</sup> Regimes are the context within which the translation process takes place. On the basis of this framework, a rational choice approach, or strategic interaction, is used to explain the outcome of actors' behaviour (see Figure 5.1).

Yet, he seems much less inclined to accept Wolfers' contention that this makes an explanatory theory with predictive virtues impossible. Let me show this with his discussion about the formation of interests. Keohane criticises the circular use of power or wealth for empirical analysis, because they can only be assessed *ex post*. Yet he accepts the focus on the *pursuit* of wealth and power as “working hypotheses about the motivations of actors that emphasize specific interests rather than ideology or rhetoric.”<sup>56</sup> This is supplemented by the assumptions that actors are rational egoists where rationality implies consistent, ordered preferences, and cost-benefit calculus to maximise utility and

<sup>52</sup> An explicit attempt to develop a non-economist rational model, see Michael Zürn, *Interessen und Institutionen in der internationalen Politik. Grundlegung und Anwendung des situationsstrukturellen Ansatzes* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1992).

<sup>53</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 121.

<sup>55</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 20-21, 22 (quote).

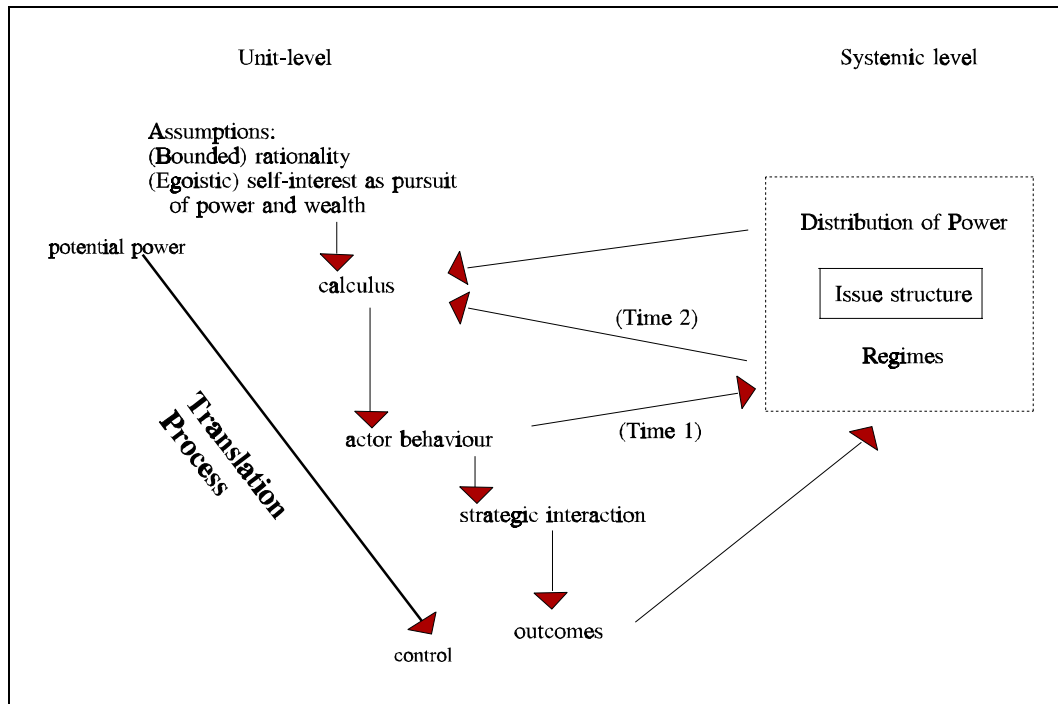


Figure 5.1 A simplified model of Robert O. Keohane's rational actor model.

Egoism means that their utility functions are independent of one another.<sup>57</sup> Hence, we have the typical economic rational choice approach.<sup>58</sup>

Yet, at another place, he correctly argues that the assumptions of interest formation, rational egoism, are rather reductionist. Indeed, he argues for intersubjectively derived interests, not for the assumed pursuit of wealth and power:

Altruists and saints can be rational as the crassest materialist... It is the assumption of egoism, not that of rationality, that their behavior violates... Rational-choice does not necessarily imply that people are egoists. But to use rational-choice logic, one needs to make *some* assumptions about the values and interests of the actors... Any rational-choice analysis has to assume a prior context of power, expectations, values, and conventions, which affect how interests are determined as well as what calculations, given interests, are made.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> Arthur Stein argues for a similar causal argument: deduction of a set of interests (or preferences) from (1) structural factors, as the distribution of power, or changes in human knowledge, and (2) national factors and then ascertaining what order will emerge. See Arthur Stein (1982) "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World", in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 48-53.

<sup>59</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 74-75.

On the one hand, he describes this approach as a Weberian ideal type explanation, understood as a causal model. “The construction of unreal expectations based on assumptions of rational egoism contributes to a causal analysis without committing us to the view that the assumptions of the theory are necessarily true.”<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, he himself shows that no causality applies. On the systemic level, the distribution of power is not a causal explanation. At the unit level, interests are derived from the context. The content of utility maximisation is indeterminate, albeit the rational mechanism can be assumed for all. The result would be to switch to an interpretive approach, where rational choice serves not to predict or explain, but to understand particular historical cases. This would be compatible with his reference to Clifford Geertz, where regimes are seen as the necessary cultural background against which the meaning of an act of cooperation can be interpreted and understood.<sup>61</sup> It would also be compatible with his rebuttal of Grieco’s critique that “relative gain” explanations are, among other things for reasons of fungibility, inherently ambiguous.<sup>62</sup> Finally, it would be consonant with Keohane’s case studies. He comes to the result that in some issue-areas Realist explanations prevail, and in others Complex Interdependence explanations.<sup>63</sup> Yet, Keohane can show the dominance of the CI model only *a posteriori* in a historical analysis. This is certainly not a new paradigm, but puzzle-solving in the Normal Science of an old. If one takes Lakatos’ account of scientific progress as basic approach, then this *a posteriori* element is considered a characteristic of a “degenerative research programme”.<sup>64</sup> Very honestly, he admits that his analysis was no test or verification.<sup>65</sup> But there is no discussion of switching to another methodology or epistemology. Aron’s puzzles remain unchanged.

Similarly the arguments in favour of the causal explanatory model are made in the same vein in which Bull argued for an overall concept of power: even if it might not be there, we need it. He endorses the “systemic first” part of Waltz, because “causal analysis is difficult at the unit level because of the apparent importance of idiosyncratic factors” and because “analyzing state behaviour from ‘inside-out’ alone leads observers to ignore

<sup>60</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War”, in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 276-77. Joseph Grieco accepts that he has not yet much treated the convertibility of such gaps in gains into increments of additional influence and the fungibility of this additional influence across issues. See Joseph M. Grieco, “Understanding the problem of international cooperation: the limits of neoliberal institutionalism and the future of realist theory”, in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, p. 328.

<sup>63</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and changes in international economic regimes, 1967-1977”, in Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George (eds), *Change in the International System* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press), pp. 131-162.

<sup>64</sup> Keohane accepts Lakatos’ epistemological position. See “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond”, p. 160 f. For a paradigmatic statement of degenerative research programmes, see Imre Lakatos, “Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes”, in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press), p. 118.

<sup>65</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 217-18.



the context of action: the pressures exerted on all states by the competition among them.”<sup>66</sup> The first is only a problem if one conceives structural causal explanation as the only possible form of science. And the second is a problem of the researcher. There is nothing inherent in an individualist Weberian approach that would turn attention away from considering the context: indeed, to understand this context, one needs to refer to the meanings given by the actors. Again, competition is said to exist as if it was a natural fact.

Hence, Keohane sticks to an approach where the international realm sets the range of successful behaviour (independently of the actor’s perceptions) and where actors are assumed to act as rational egoists pursuing wealth and power. He complements Baldwin’s concept of power by specifying the different international contexts, i.e. the most general policy-contingency frameworks, within which different fungibilities apply. Both conceive power relationally. They see power analysis as a translation process from potential to actual power. Both see this translation as empirically difficult to study for the low fungibility assumption. They resist the “conversion process model” where the translation failures are explained entirely by lacking will. But since both show the difficulty of assessing power *a priori*, they cannot really show how one would be able to make a clearcut prediction. Despite their attempt to leave a causal analysis intact, their own discussion undermines the possibility of a causal analysis of the positivist kind. Educated guesses can always be rearranged *post hoc*. Therefore Keohane repeatedly speaks about “description”. But they do not follow Aron’s path to leave power analysis as a possibility to *interpret* particular historical systems and outcomes.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4. Neorealist Power Analysis

In the following, I define Neorealist power analysis by referring only to one part in both Baldwin’s and Keohane’s approach. Although I have shown that their theoretical discussion very subtly shows the difficulties of such a project, I will not pick up those passages which seem closer to an interpretive approach, but extrapolate the causal analysis they both declare to be their aim. Neorealist power analysis will refer to a postivistic causal approach based on an economistic rational choice. Let me summarise its characteristics.

The Neorealist concept of power is relational and causal. The resulting analysis takes low fungibility into account and explains an outcome by inscribing actors’ power and interests within different international contexts. The analysis proceeds in stages. First, the systemic level is varied. One establishes the particular issue-structures within which the behaviour is studied. Then, the interdependencies or policy-contingency frameworks help to assess the distribution of (potential) power. This distribution of power is now inscribed

<sup>66</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Given his own theoretical discussion, it is quite difficult to understand, why a historical sociology approach would be as impossible as Keohane implies: “Without prior systemic theory, unit-level analysis of world politics floats in an empirical and conceptual vacuum.” See *After Hegemony*, p. 26.

into the continuum from Realism to Complex Interdependence. This variance causally explains different unit-level behaviour. Second, the unit-level is varied for the translation of potential into actual power over outcomes. Once the systemic factors are assessed, strategic interaction plays out the actor's behavioural properties. These consist in the now established power and the assumed stable interests in survival, expressed as the pursuit of wealth and power. Controlled for the factor of will, perception, and bounded rationality, the strategic interaction of power causes the outcome.

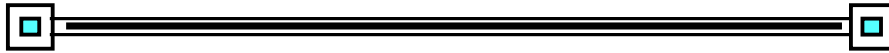
Keohane and Baldwin seek to have an explanatory theory close to the economic model of explanation. Here one does not limit rational choice to the understanding of past events (for which a dispositional concept of power would be perfect), but wants to explain or predict behaviour on the basis of a set of opportunities, beliefs, desires and rational action. Baldwin explicitly argues against the attempt to use conversion problems as the sole explanation for erroneous outcome predictions. He prefers the assumption of low fungibility. This has the effect of diminishing the intentional part in power explanations, but it does not expunge the dilemma of producing testable predictions under counterfactual conditions in a social science. Without the assumption of a kind of power - money analogy, this undertaking cannot work.

Keohane discusses the problem that Baldwin's policy-contingency framework might be unique every time. The theory proceeds, however, against such an assumption. Indeed, Keohane and Nye repeatedly stress that systematic theories of linkages, albeit not yet available, will help us in the future to resolve the problem.<sup>68</sup> This is not sure, though. If (1) the aim is to strengthen the explanatory value of the complex and multidimensional concept of power; (2) this is to be done by recovering the rationalising (Morgenthau, Waltz) or causal (Dahl) aspects of power; (3) the recovering is done by reducing the focus of power analysis in domain and scope (and to actual decisions), because all other power analysis is close to meaningless; then the reconstruction of the different dimension of power through scope/domain linkages will present the same difficulties as the concept of overall-power on its original complex and multidimensional level. Were a theory of linkages possible, one would not need to disaggregate power in scope or domain.

<sup>68</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "*Power and Interdependence Revisited*".

## 6

### **Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis**



After the return to a scientific form of Realism, power analysis increasingly turned from a defense to a critique of Realism. In this chapter, I shall argue that the turn from Realism to Neorealism, with its consequent reliance on economic methodology, in fact diminished the substantial range of the original concept of power. It is the basic underlying thrust of the present study that taking power analysis seriously leads beyond Neorealism.

Some recent studies by authors dissatisfied with existing versions of Neorealism have attempted to widen the power concept to include what has been called structural power. Their common claim is that the focus on strategic interaction or the bargaining level of analysis does not capture important power phenomena. I shall argue that these notions of structural power involve three distinct meanings, of which only one can be shown to be compatible with the choice-theoretical power concept that underlies Neorealism.

Finally, this chapter claims that none of the structural power concepts is able to provide both a comprehensive and a coherent power analysis, either because it still omits particular power phenomena or because it overloads the concept of power. Instead of pursuing the track of continuously widening the concept, I will propose a pair or dyad of concepts. The word “*power*” will be reserved as an agent concept, and the term “*governance*” will represent effects not due to a particular agent, whether individual or collective. More generally, the term “*power analysis*” will encompass both concepts and deal with the link between power and international governance.

By approaching power from the methodological level, this study presents a more systematic analysis than those that either take the form of reviews, or enumerations of different approaches, or else do not even consider the literature beyond David Baldwin.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See respectively Richard L. Sklar, “On the Concept of Power in Political Economy”, in Dalmas H. Nelson and Richard L. Sklar (eds), *Towards a Humanistic Science of Politics: Essays in Honor of F. Dunham*

The argument will be pursued in two steps. A first part will analyse three meanings of structural power. Then, I shall propose a more coherent power analysis characterised by a dyad of concepts.

## 1. Beyond Neorealism? Meanings of structural power

Some recent studies have attempted to widen the power concept to include what has been called “structural power.” I shall argue that these new notions of structural power involve three different meanings, namely *indirect institutional power*, *nonintentional power*, and *impersonal empowering* (See Table 5.1). Only one of them is yet compatible with the underlying framework of Neorealism, and none is able to provide a framework for the analysis of power phenomena that is both encompassing and coherent.

**Table 5.1:** Meanings of *structural power* and related concepts.

*Power as the production of*

	indirect institutional effects	unintended/unconscious effects	Impersonally created effects
Krasner	Meta-power		
Strange	structural power	structural power	
Caporaso Cap. & Haggard	structural power		structural power locational power
Gill & Law	structural power		hegemony/structural power
Ashley			hegemony in the realm of <i>doxa</i>

### 1.1. Power as a relational concept: indirect institutional power as an update of Neorealist power analysis

One meaning of structural power is *indirect institutional power*. These concepts of structural power (or meta-power) have to be understood as control over outcomes not via

*Wortmuth* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 179-206; James Caporaso and Stephen Haggard, “Power in the International Political Economy”, in Richard J. Stoll and Michael D. Ward (eds), *Power in World Politics* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), pp. 99-120. David A. Baldwin’s “Interdependence and Power” is the last reference in Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham (eds), *The Dictionary of World Politics: A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 322-24.

direct confrontation, but by changing the setting in which the confrontation occurs. Even though this seems to depart from the usual Neorealist power analysis, a comparison with Baldwin's framework will show that it is in fact compatible with the assumptions of the economic approach. This concept is unsatisfactory, however, because it is too restrictive even for an agent-based concept of power.

Explicitly relying on Bacharach's and Baratz' "second face of power", Cheryl Christensen develops a similar concept of "structural power" where actors control the agenda, or the situational setting in which interaction occurs.<sup>2</sup> Later, Stephen Krasner tries to extend his particular regime analysis to embrace a form of power analysis. He analyzes how the regime concept can be located on the same conversion process from resources via power to influence (over outcomes) that we have already met in Keohane and Nye. He thus follows the traditional Realist assumption, that regimes are, in the last resort, still a function of the distribution of power and the relations among states. However, there need not always be congruity among power distribution, regimes and related behavior or outcomes. In other words, there is a time lag of adjustment that allows for a certain autonomy of the realm of norms, as well as an interactive process between (power) base and norms.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, lags and feedbacks between power base and regime are the basic puzzles of Krasner's research program. Krasner makes two points about the interaction of power and regimes. First, he argues that changes of regimes alter the context in such a way to render particular resources more important for power capability than others. The approach thereby recovers part of what one could call the historically contingent character of power resources.<sup>4</sup> Second, regimes can, after a time lag, be conceived of as independent sources of influence.

However, through a shift of the argument, power and regime are not only two different sources of influence but regime is in fact reduced to a source of power. Krasner has defined *power* as potential control over resources, and conceived of *power resources* as those phenomena that can be used to exercise influence. It follows that normative structures and regimes can be envisaged as just another type of power *source* and their potential control as just another form of power. Then, one could argue, Krasner's two approaches to power and regime are fused into one. Krasner has taken this logical step by defining a second level of power relations:

The boundaries of this work can be more clearly delineated by distinguishing between two categories of political behavior. Relational power behavior refers to efforts to maximize values within a given set of institutional structures; meta-power behavior refers to efforts to change the institutions themselves. Relational power refers to the

<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Christensen, "Structural Power and National Security", in Klaus Knorr and Frank N. Trager (eds), *Economic Issues and National Security* (Kansas: Regents Press for the National Security Education Program, 1977), pp. 127ff.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, "Regimes and the Limits of Realism: Regimes as autonomous variables", *International Organization*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982), p. 499.

<sup>4</sup> For this argument, see Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 64.

ability to change outcomes or affect the behavior of others within a given regime. Meta-power refers to the ability to change the rules of the game. Outcomes can be changed both by altering the resources available to individual actors and by changing the regimes that condition action.<sup>5</sup>

Since regimes are a source of power, any intentional attempt to change regimes or to set new institutional frames for actors' capabilities must be integrated into power analysis. This is an *indirect* form of power and is often hidden or tacit. Both Christensen and Krasner argue their case with respect to the New International Economic Order as an attempt to change the institutional settings in which North-South relations occur in order to upset the relational power advantage of the North. Recall that power conceptualisations in policy sciences can redefine the realm of political issues. Whereas Christensen is interested in the extent to which OPEC or the Group of 77 will succeed in opening the agenda in their favour, i.e. if their structural power attempt can be successful, Krasner's analysis prepares the ground for the US and UK to leave international regimes for the "necessary" (thus non-changeable) features of international politics. Power redefines the political borders of the status quo which was found, here, to be too large for US interests.<sup>6</sup>

This wider concept of meta-power is consistent with Baldwin's power approach. In both, one must include a contextual analysis of social norms and a study of the historical background before assessing power. This has the important consequence that any technological, political, cultural, or normative development that improves the efficacy of certain resources in affecting outcomes can, in turn, become a target for attempts to gain influence. Therefore, two strategies are possible to improve one's potential power in a given situation: either a quantitative improvement of the relevant situational power resources or a change of the environment that defines the situationally relevant power resources. The latter is exactly what Krasner defines as "meta-power." Thus, *the intentional agenda-setting that Krasner tried to integrate into Realist power analysis can indeed be coherently accounted for within the methodology used by Neorealists.*

## **1.2. Power as a dispositional concept: nonintentional power and the limits of Neorealist power analysis**

The second distinct meaning of structural power is still conceived at the level of agents, but refers to an action's unintended (and sometimes unconscious) effects. This meaning

<sup>5</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Structural Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 14. For a very similar approach, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Fall 1990), pp. 153-71, in particular pp. 166-68. On top of the traditional "command power", he conceives of a form of power, called "co-optive power" or "soft power," which (1) expressed in terms of resources, is derived from intangible resources like the rules in regimes, and cultural and/or ideological attraction; and (2) expressed in terms of power exercises, consists in structuring the situations in which power relations occur.

<sup>6</sup> Krasner's argument was made in the context of the US and the UK decisions to "react" against this attempt by quitting the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

cannot be simply grafted onto a Neorealist understanding of power, because the latter links power to intentionality. It can be linked to a dispositional concept of power. This section will show how the second meaning of structural power can successfully supplement Krasner's concept. In the final part of the chapter, dispositional approaches of this sort will be shown to be unsatisfactory because their concept of structure is too limited.

Strange's work illustrates this notion of structural power as nonintentional power. She developed her concept in opposition to the literature of American hegemonic decline. The expression of "decline" is chosen on purpose. Hegemonic Stability Theory can be characterised by three propositions<sup>7</sup>:

- (1) The emergence of a hegemon is conducive/necessary for the provision of an international public good (hegemony thesis).
- (2) The necessary existence of free riders and/or a loss of legitimacy will undermine the relative power position of the hegemon (entropy thesis).
- (3) A declining hegemonic power presages a declining provision of the international public good (decline thesis).

For Strange, the hegemonic decline school is based on a fallacious inversion of the last thesis, namely, that the declining provision of international public goods would indicate the declining power of the hegemon. She tries to show that the United States is not unable but just unwilling, to provide or help to provide, basic functions of a global political economy. Her concept of structural power is crucial in pointing to the global reach of a so-called transnational Empire with the United States at its center.

She uses structural power to refer to the increasing diffusion of international power, in both its effects and its origins, due to the increasing transnationalisation of non-territorially linked networks. Structural power is, on the one hand, a concept similar to Krasner's intentional meta-power: the ability to shape the security, financial, productive, and knowledge structures.<sup>8</sup> Here, power is structural because it has an indirect diffusion via structures. On the other hand, Strange understands power as structural, because it refers to the increasingly diffused sources and agents that contribute to the functioning of the global political economy.<sup>9</sup> Taken together, the provision of global functions appears as the result of an interplay of deliberate and *nonintentional influence of decisions and*

<sup>7</sup> The reference definition of hegemonic stability theory has been given by Robert O. Keohane, "The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes, 1967-1977", in Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George (eds), *Change in the International System* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 131-62. Yet it seems too much tailored for his regime-approach, neglecting the collective good argument. For a convincing argument, see Duncan Snidal, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory," *International Organization*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1985), pp. 579-614, especially p. 581.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Strange, "International Political Economy: The Story So Far and the Way Ahead," in W. Ladd Hollist and F. LaMond Tullis, eds., *An International Political Economy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> For a concise presentation of recent power concepts with a similar analysis of Strange's approach, see Bertrand Badie and Marie-Claude Smouts, *Le retournement du monde: Sociologie de la scène internationale* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques & Dalloz, 1992), pp. 148-56.

*nondecisions* made by governments and other actors.<sup>10</sup> The international system appears as run by a “transnational empire,” whose exact center is difficult to locate because it is not tied to a specific territory, but whose main base is in the United States.<sup>11</sup> In other words, even though actors in the United States might not always intend or be able to control the effects of their actions, the international structures are set up in a way that decision in some countries are systematically tied to and affect actors in the same and other countries.

The September 1992 crisis of the European Monetary System (EMS) shows that structural power exists also outside the United States. German reunification led to inflation that was controlled only partly through a reversal of prior fiscal policies. The German Bundesbank then exported the problem via higher interest rates. These higher rates helped to trigger a speculative attack on the British Pound and the Italian Lira. This, in turn, involved so much money moving across borders, that central banks quickly judged interventions to be too costly for both the inflating DM and the deflating monetary reserves of the attacked currencies. Thus, one basic reason for these effects is a specific policy mix decided by the German government together with the strained social consensus in Germany. Germany’s position and sheer “weight” within the European system gives it the privilege of avoiding some of the painful adjustments others are facing. It manages a transnational currency as if it were a national one.<sup>12</sup> Yet, for *particular* actors, many of what appear to be purely domestic decisions in fact significantly affect other actors, whether intentionally or not. Actors in Germany have a great deal of nonintentional or nonconscious power to which all the other participants of the international game must nevertheless adapt their behavior (typically in worst-case scenarios). Or to use an image of Pierre Hassner’s for the description of a condominium: it does not make any difference to the trampled grass if the elephants above it make love or war. This structural power is underrated if one analyzes power only in the control of specific contests where different intentions clash.

The remaining part of this section will analyse the two implicit claims of this form of structural power. First, it will show that economic approaches can include the study of

<sup>10</sup> See the following works by Susan Strange: “What about International Relations?” in Susan Strange, ed., *Paths to International Political Economy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 190-91. This notion is developed most fully in *States and Markets: An Introduction to International Political Economy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). For the empirical analysis of US non-decisions, see *Casino Capitalism* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), chap. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Strange, “Toward a Theory of Transnational Empire,” in *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges*, pp. 161-76.

<sup>12</sup> With regard to the management of the U.S. dollar, this critique has a longer tradition. To cite just one example: Raymond Aron, *Les dernières années du siècle* (The Century’s Last Years) (Paris: Julliard, 1984), p. 44. It is important to note that the power to avoid or to export adjustments can on the long run undermine the very base of “national” power. This argument is most thoroughly made in David P. Calleo’s work, as e.g. *The Imperious Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); and *Beyond American Hegemony. The Future of the Western Alliance* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). See also Dieter Senghaas, *Friedensprojekt Europa* (Peace Project Europe) (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), p. 55.



non-intentional effects, but must exclude it from the *concept* and *analysis* of power and refer to it as a random issue or simply good or bad “luck”. Second, nonintentional power can, however, be accounted for by a methodological individualist position. Strange’s approach is based not on an economic, but on a *dispositional* concept of power.

For the exclusion of nonintentional effects from the concept and analysis of power, we return to Baldwin’s framework as the choice-theoretical reference point. Baldwin tries to elaborate a policy-oriented, manipulative, and thus agent-focused theory of power. This empirical research programme allows for a much wider type of reasoning that focuses on outcomes and not on a manipulative agent. In other words, Baldwin seems to be torn because of a conceptual dilemma that is also applicable to Krasner’s concept: His conceptual approach to power expands to include all effects that influence outcomes, whereas his *actual* policy analysis argues for a power concept that is limited to the intentional agent. We could describe this in William Riker’s terminology as a dilemma in which Baldwin’s aim is the study of statecraft through a “recipe-like” concept of causality (and power), while his conceptual analysis pulls him toward a “necessary and sufficient” kind of causality.<sup>13</sup> Whereas the former focuses on manipulative techniques, the latter aims at a full explanation of what affects the outcome, whether overtly or covertly. According to Baldwin, “Although Riker may be correct in asserting the superiority of the latter concept of causality for some types of science, the former concept is more useful in the policy sciences and will therefore be employed here.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, as Riker says, “The more profound difficulty with recipe-causality, however, is that it takes as fixed all relevant variables, except the manipulative one... If a non-manipulative variable in the antecedent condition does have a relation to the effect, then it must be involved in the cause, even though recipe-causality does not admit it.”<sup>15</sup> In his attempt to preserve power as an operationalisable causal concept, Baldwin incorporates more and more items to account for the exact contextual assessment of manipulative techniques; yet, he avoids providing the full account of the causality chain towards which this very extension pulls his analysis. To cite Riker again:

The difference between the two kinds of causality is, like the difference among definitions of power, a difference in orientation toward outcomes. In recipe-like causality, the full explanation of the effect is not the problem. Rather the problem is to explain how the effect can be made to occur. *If no manipulative technique is available, cause may be non-existent.* By contrast, in the necessary and sufficient condition kind of causality, the center of attention is on the effect rather than on manipulative

<sup>13</sup> William H. Riker, “Some Ambiguities in the Notion of Power”, in R. Bell, D.V. Edwards, R.H. Wagner (eds), *Political Power: A Reader in Theory and Practice* (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 116. The recipe-like concept is defined as the production of effects through the manipulation of nature.

<sup>14</sup> David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Riker, “Some Ambiguities in the Notion of Power,” p. 116.

techniques. Here the full explanation of outcomes is at stake. Hence, cause cannot be non-existent, although it can be unidentified.<sup>16</sup>

The choice of a recipe concept of power deprives the analysis of those causal factors that cannot be linked or reduced to the agent's *conscious* manipulation of the resources at hand. Power as the production of unintended effects is not captured because it falls outside the causal link between A's intention and B's changed behavior. The only exception that the pluralist power literature accepts, the rule of anticipated reaction, is a case of imputed intentions, but intentions nevertheless. Therefore, by reducing the analysis of power to the establishment of a causal chain from A's intention to the outcome, a choice-theoretical approach cannot theoretically incorporate the idea of power as unintended effects *into the concept of power*.

This does not mean that these unintended effects are forgotten in a choice-theoretical analysis. Riker's important point consists of showing that by sticking to a specific mode of explanation, these unintended effects must be dealt with either as environmental constraints or as purely random phenomena. Since manipulative power entails the idea that one can change the course of affairs, those excluded items appear as a kind of fate against which even the most powerful actors remain powerless. The far-reaching consequence of this apparently innocent methodological move lies on the level of political action and responsibility. If we have to face fate, then there is nothing to do. Yet, Strange's insistence on unintended effects attempts to show that agents could make a difference if they wanted to. Her widened concept of power aims at shedding light on the possibilities for change and on the (political) responsibility for nonmanipulative effects that a limited concept of power will tend to disregard.

Concepts of structural power suggest that this widening of the concept needs to integrate a structural element into the power concept. In fact, this is not true. One can leave intentionality out of an agent-based power concept, but it is then necessary to relax the empiricist assumptions, the interactionist approach, and the general causal analogy. Thus, the analytical chain starts not from an agent's intentions but from basic actions. That this conceptualisation is not just a theoretical possibility can be shown by referring to a recent redefinition of power in exactly these terms.

Peter Morriss bases his analysis on a concept of power that he distinguishes from mere influence by pointing to the profound dispositional character of power: power, to him, refers to a capacity, ability or dispositional property. "So power, as a dispositional concept, is neither a *thing* (a resource or vehicle) nor an *event* (an exercise of power): it is a *capacity*."<sup>17</sup> Since power is defined as an ability, every basic action, controlled by will, at the disposal of an actor can be considered as power. The capacity to influence by

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117. Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 19, original emphasis.

will is thus a criterion to distinguish power from a (dispositional) property. Morriss goes on to distinguish, as shown in Figure 2, three categories of ability:<sup>18</sup>

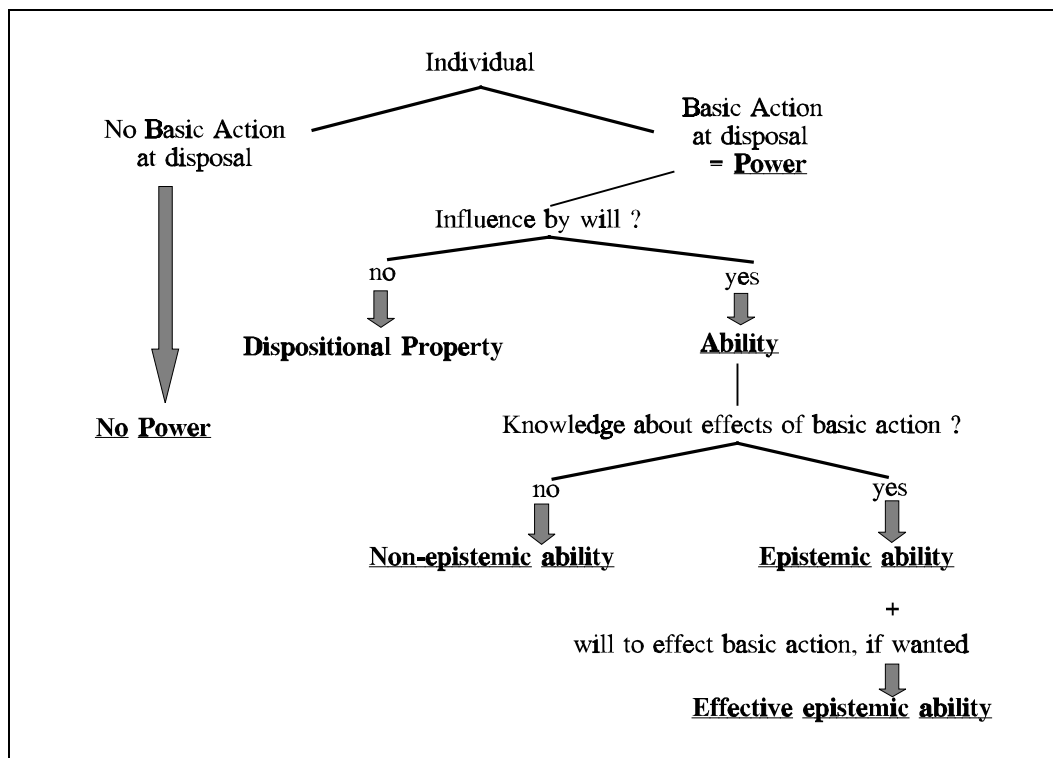


Figure 6.1 Peter Morriss' dispositional conceptualisation of abilities.

Since this conceptualisation of power is based on “effecting”, Morriss disposes also of a category for nonintentional power. “Non-epistemic” abilities are those that are effected in an uncontrolled way, such as when agents are unaware of their capacities and their consequences or they choose the wrong basic action for the intended outcome. This category is able to take account of Strange’s idea of nonintentional power that looks at power from the “receiving side.” Morriss shows that whenever “we want to work out what people might do to us, it is non-epistemic power we are concerned with.”<sup>19</sup>

This stress on mere capacities and not their exercise seems at first hand close to the traditional power analyses in IR. The important difference is that those approaches posited a direct link between the *control* of outcomes and capacities, whether they are implemented or not. Strange’s structural power looks at power from the point of view of the diffused power effects, and stresses the uncontrolled consequences of power actions.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> Coming to the second side of her power approach, the diffusion not of the effects but of the origins of power, she does, however, individualize a privileged actor, the “international business civilization.” In other words, nonintentional power is very unevenly distributed throughout the international power structure.

The major difference between such a dispositional approach and an interactionist rational-choice approach is that these consequences are part of the power assessment and are not just random. This contradicts approaches like Klaus Knorr's, for instance, who explicitly and coherently refuses to accept such a form of nonintentional power. Knorr dismisses François Perroux's concept of dominance, which is close to Strange's structural power, as purely incidental and therefore irrelevant for power analysis.<sup>21</sup> This exclusion of nonintentionality privileges the manipulative actor's (or power holder's) view and leaves the analysis of power with a specific blind spot, *the tacit power of the strong*. If Neorealism goes on following this route, it is to be expected that criticisms of the kind implicit in different structural power concepts will continually reappear. Hence Baldwin very honestly acknowledges, albeit without much elaboration, that "Concepts of power that allow for the possibility of unintended influence may be more useful to the student of dependency and autonomy than other power concepts."<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3. Power as a structural/intersubjective concept: impersonal power

The last of the three meanings of structural power and related concepts can be generically described as *impersonal power* because the origin of the produced effect is not located at the level of actors. Here, two different conceptualisations can be distinguished. The first could be described as a *positional* concept that focuses on the impersonal bias of international relations that systematically gives an advantage to certain actors due to their specific position or role in the international system. The second stresses the link between knowledge and power, arguing that power requires prior intersubjective recognition. Both approaches explicitly attempt to abandon the underlying choice-theoretical mode of explanation. These concepts too are unsatisfactory because they tend to overload and thus render incoherent the single concept of power. This section will present the two approaches; the next part takes their insufficiencies as the basis for developing a different power analysis derived from a dyad of concepts.

The first, more positional, approach to power has been introduced by James Caporaso. He accepts the centrality of power, yet gives it a double twist in order to incorporate the link between the global political economy and less developed countries' economic and political development. The focus on "bargaining power in asymmetrical interdependence" is considered insufficient.<sup>23</sup> He acknowledges that *dependence* is, on the bargaining level,

<sup>21</sup> Klaus Knorr, *Power and Wealth: The Political Economy of International Power* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 77-78.

<sup>22</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Interdependence and Power: A Conceptual Analysis", in *Paradoxes of Power*, p. 205.

<sup>23</sup> James A. Caporaso, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Dependence and Dependency in the Global System" (and) "Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: a Structural and Behavioral analysis," *International Organization*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Winter 1978), pp. 4, 28. This alludes to Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence*.

no criterion for a qualitative differentiation of less developed countries.<sup>24</sup> Yet he includes the so-called “second face” of power, derived from Bacharach and Baratz, to save a concept of dependency. This is called structural power. Implicitly, he also repeats the ambiguity between nondecisions as “structural bias” or as “antedecisions that can be found in the work of Bacharach and Baratz.”<sup>25</sup> Caporaso refers to the latter in his definition of structural power as “the ability to manipulate the choices, capabilities, alliance opportunities, and pay-offs that actors may utilise.”<sup>26</sup> This is in line with Krasner’s concept of meta-power. Yet he also speaks of “the social structuring of agendas [that] might systematically favor certain parties”, which is definitely an *impersonal* concept.<sup>27</sup>

In a similar vein, Gill and Law try to overcome a behavioural power paradigm in IR and IPE by a concept of structural power that is said to capture better the *indirect* forms of power.<sup>28</sup> Explicitly following Lukes, they begin by distinguishing three dimensions of power: overt, covert, and structural.<sup>29</sup> Later, they introduced a direct/indirect distinction which seems to rely on individual action as the distinctive criterion. Thus, overt and covert power are linked to agents’ decisions and nondecisions in pursuing their interests, whereas structural power refers to “material and normative aspects, such that patterns of incentives and constraints are systematically created.”<sup>30</sup>

Their “*impersonal material setting*” is nearly synonymous with the functioning of markets. Through markets, the structural power of capital is exercised.<sup>31</sup> The state-market nexus becomes the very center of the analysis.<sup>32</sup> Gill and Law focus on the relationship

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 2, 18. This point has been most elegantly made by Sanjaya Lall, “Is ‘Dependence’ a useful concept in analysing underdevelopment?”

<sup>25</sup> This ambiguity has been largely neglected in the literature. For an exception, see Geoffrey Debnam, *The Analysis of Power*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> James A. Caporaso, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Dependence and Dependency in the Global System”, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> James Caporaso, “Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: a Structural and Behavioral analysis,” p. 33. In more recent writings, he retreats slightly from this latter position. He retains the basic division between relational (agent-based) and structural power approaches. Yet, together with Stephen Haggard, he now concludes that these forms of power are not necessarily competing categories: they both refer to (different kinds) of resources that affect outcomes understood as bargains (see their “Power in the International Political Economy”). For a critique of this argument, see the analysis of Hugh Ward, in the third part of this chapter.

<sup>28</sup> See in particular two works by Stephen Gill and David Law: *The Global Political Economy* (New York: Harvester, 1988); and “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 4 (December 1989), pp. 475-99.

<sup>29</sup> For a similar account, based on Steven Lukes’s three dimensions, see Keith Krause, “Military Statecraft: Power and Influence in Soviet and American Arms Transfer Relationships”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3 (September 1991), pp. 313-36.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Gill and David Law, *The Global Political Economy*, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> For the definition of capital, see “Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital,” pp. 480-81. Note that the terms “power of markets” and “structural power” are sometimes used interchangeably; see *The Global Political Economy*, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> The state/market nexus “politicises” (in an Eastonian way) international economic relations. The analysis is centred around the two competing authoritative allocation mechanisms (for values or resources) that exist: states and markets. See Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Internationale Politik: Ein Konfliktmodell* (Paderborn,

between the political organisation of the global political economy into nation-states and the power of capital. On the one hand, international anarchy enhances capital's bargaining position, allowing it to play one country against another; on the other hand, national sovereignty can reduce capital's power through statist intervention, such as welfarism, mercantilism, and the public sector. The absence of a world government is as much a structural prerequisite for the power of capital as a limitation to the potentially global reach of market-economic activities. Hence, in the material part of their approach, the logic of the market overtakes the balance of power or regimes as the central and slightly mechanistic explanatory variable, which provides the basic causality and predictive virtue.<sup>33</sup>

However, Gill and Law also stress a second *normative* aspect of structural power/hegemony. This is the basic link between structural power and Antonio Gramsci's analysis of hegemony, which, following the work of Robert Cox, they want to transfer to the international level. True, no Realist would dispute the derivation of norms from power relations, the conservative bias of law in the hands of the ruling group, the importance of the normative setting for specific historic global political economies (regimes of accumulation), or, finally, the anticipated ruling of power where its overt demonstration is not needed.<sup>34</sup> However, the Gramscian approach derives the ruling ideology from a class analysis, that is from the sphere of production.<sup>35</sup> It goes beyond crude materialism by pointing to the fact that the ruling elite can coopt part of the ruled into a "historic bloc" which makes orthodox revolutionary politics impossible. The research program of this power approach consists of finding the new transnational historic bloc and the way its (neoliberal) discourse and practice suborns dependent classes and preempts their opposition.

This latter point, in particular the consensual aspect of power, has been developed by Ashley in the second impersonal conceptualisation of power as power/knowledge. The consensual aspect is traditionally handled through the concept of *legitimacy* that, in the usual reading of Max Weber, distinguishes between power (*Macht*) and authority/rule (*Herrschaft*). *Herrschaft* requires legitimacy, that is, a form of internal acceptance by the power addressees.<sup>36</sup> The poststructuralist twist can be seen in the metatheoretical location of phenomena of power. This means that consensus is conceptualised not only in an

F.R.G.: Schöningh, 1981) and "Internationalizing Politics: Some Answers to the Question of Who Does What to Whom," in Czempel and Rosenau, *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges*, pp. 117-34.

<sup>33</sup> See therefore "Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital," p. 485.

<sup>34</sup> See for the first point Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 342ff., and for the latter, Kenneth Waltz, "International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of Power", p. 309. Note in this context Antonio Gramsci's interest in the Italian Realist tradition (Niccolò Machiavelli, Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto) in *Noterelle sulla politica del Machiavelli. Quaderno 13* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Cox insists in "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method," *Millennium* 12 (Summer 1983), pp. 162-75 on the rooting of hegemony in social forces, to avoid repeating Machiavelli (see especially p. 164).

<sup>36</sup> Norberto Bobbio, "La teoria dello stato e del potere", p. 226.

agent's recognition but also as produced and reproduced outcomes of rituals and discourses that are not intentionally effected by particular actors. Legitimacy understood as the result of a social contract is an insufficient concept to account comprehensively for consensus and governance.<sup>37</sup> In this formulation, the consensual aspect of power entails, but means certainly something more than, a shift of focus to a kind of Weberian approach wrapped in a Gramscian blanket.<sup>38</sup> This approach has, then, its specificity not only in the actual meaning given to power but also in the realm to which it is applied. It does not analyse power *in* IR and IPE as reflected in its discourse, but the power *of* precisely this discourse. The poststructuralist critique aims at that level where such power practices are concealed, that is, the metatheoretical level which underlies Realist analysis and consequently its deliberate policies.<sup>39</sup> *The Realist discourse is attacked as a power practice itself.*

Ashley expands what one could call a *communicative* approach<sup>40</sup> to a Foucauldian genealogical power conceptualisation. His genealogical attitude can be summarised as an attempt to reveal the power practices that bind, conquer, and administer social space and time, that is, the emergence of "disciplines."<sup>41</sup>

Crucial for this understanding of power is a specific concept of practices that includes not only interactive influence attempts but also rites, routines, and discourses. Thereby one disposes of an intersubjective level of analysis different from an objectified or even determinist structure and from an intentional agent. Rites and routines are not just a constraint or a resource for agents, but they empower agents. In this approach it makes sense to speak of the power of rites. According to David Kertzer, "The power of the rite is based in good part on the potency of its symbols and its social context... People's emotional involvement in political rites is certainly a key source of their power."<sup>42</sup>

There are two ways in which rites can be linked to power. First, they can obviously be used as a means or source of an intentional influence attempt. A recent example is the Western propaganda that modelled Saddam Hussein as a modern Adolf Hitler. The

<sup>37</sup> See also Michel Foucault, "Corso del 14 gennaio 1976," in Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del Potere. Interventi Politici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> For the stress on *Herrschaft*, see Ulrich Albrecht, *Internationale Politik. Einführung in das System internationaler Herrschaft* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986). For the Gramscian wording, see Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Policies," *Review of International Studies* 14 (April 1988), pp. 133-48, in particular p. 134.

<sup>39</sup> The most radical power critique at the metatheoretical level is the poststructuralist branch of feminism. See Anne Sisson Runyan and V. Spike Peterson, "The Radical Future of Realism: Feminist Subversions of IR Theory," *Alternatives*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1991), pp. 75-76 and 97-98.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Little, "Deconstructing the Balance of Power: Two Traditions of Thought", pp. 87-100, and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Regimes, Interpretation and the 'Science' of Politics," *Millennium*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Summer 1988), pp. 263-84, especially p. 272.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics", *Alternatives*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1987), p. 418.

<sup>42</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 179, 180.

“powerful” analogy constituted a means to stimulate wide-spread approval, of US foreign policy in those European circles that usually are rather critical of it. Second, rites can also *empower* agents. In this case, the power of rites is impersonal, because it is not originating in an actor. But at the same time, it is not objective or natural like the power of hurricanes, for instance, because rites are not powerful independent of agents. The symbol of Munich can be intentionally invoked by actors, but it keeps a particular hold on Western political discourse and thus also on policy-making since 1938. Its power is constantly renewed or shaken by more recent applications. The rallying power of a national flag can be used by politicians, but the symbol escapes their control; it “governs” independently of particular intentions, albeit not independent of the practices and the meaning given to it by the group of actors involved.

Ashley derives such a form of impersonal power from the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Fundamental here is Ashley’s introduction of Bourdieu’s concept of “doxa”. Bourdieu distinguished doxa both from orthodoxy as a kind of established truth or common wisdom and from heterodoxy, which is its official contender. The two latter concepts refer to the universe of open discourse and argument and depend on each other. Doxa, on the other hand, refers to the self-evident background of the established order on which the contest between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is articulated. Even though the realm of doxa is necessary to set the stage, its contingency is not acknowledged. “Every established order tends to produce the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness.” Writes Bourdieu:

in the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call *doxa*... The instruments of knowledge of the world are in this case (objectively) political instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world by producing immediate adherence to the world, seen as self-evident and undisputed, of which they are the product and of which they reproduce the structures in a transformed form... The theory of knowledge is a dimension of political theory because the specific symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality - in particular, social reality, is a major dimension of political power.<sup>43</sup>

The domain of *doxa* represents a system of normalised recognition through continuous practice that ceases to work (and incidentally also to exist) exactly at the moment when conscious legitimation is needed. Thus, Ashley locates impersonal *empowering* explicitly at an intersubjective level, where knowledge is constituted, and acting and thinking space defined. There roles and practices are constructed, and they operate then systematically and nonintentionally, that is “naturally”, not only to exclude issues from the agenda, but also to prevent the very definition of such issues and their possible solutions. “The political power of hegemony... is neither a ‘power over’ other actors nor a ‘power to’

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 164, 165.



obtain some consciously deliberated future end among ends. The power of hegemony resides precisely in the capacity to inhabit a domain of doxa and to competently perform the rituals of power naturalized therein.”<sup>44</sup>

We can use a critique of Neorealism as an illustration of Ashley’s “dissident” power analysis. The latter would attempt to counter the closing-off procedures that the move toward Neorealism “effected” in the face of the increasing dissolution of the discipline’s boundaries in the 1970s. The qualitative difference between international and domestic politics, that is, anarchy and sovereignty, was already attacked by (1) the older behavioral claim that methodologically the study of internal and external policies is alike, (2) by the rising importance of transnational actors that undermine the concept of sovereignty, and (3) by bureaucratic politics that question the notion of a unified or rational actor. Waltz’ reformulation of Realism restored the categorical dichotomy and thus provided the discipline with a defining boundary. Waltz’ defense contained the off-loading of transnational and infranational phenomena into the area of foreign policy analysis (hence political science), thus preserving a systemic Realism. Its effect, or its power, derived from its ability to rescue IR as a respectable and legitimate discipline; respectable through its commitment to economic methodology, and legitimate because it could not be “reduced” to any other field in the social sciences’ division of labor. Waltz’ Neorealism was so “powerful”, not because its parsimonious balance of power theory could uncover more things about the real world than we knew before, but because it mobilised the scientific community’s longing for a paradigmatic core. By preempting specific heterodox views, Waltz’ discourse prepared the ground on which the legitimate debate of the discipline between Neorealism and Neoinstitutionalism could take place. In other words, it did not provide a convincing answer to the anomalies of the discipline, but was successful in mobilising established conceptions of the legitimate way to approach them.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, this strong metatheoretical outlook of poststructuralism is at once the historical symptom of a discipline in crisis, and the necessary outlook of an explanatory framework that seeks to disclose knowledge trapped in the positivist rational choice discourse of Neorealism.

Since the authors of this third meaning of structural power have themselves departed explicitly from the choice-theoretical basis of Neorealism, what is at issue here is not whether these structural approaches of power can be integrated into Neorealism; rather it is whether they are internally coherent and whether their insights are necessarily linked to a power-analysis.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Ashley, “Imposing International Purpose: Notes on a Problematic of Governance”, in Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James Rosenau (eds), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges*, p. 269.

<sup>45</sup> See Kenneth Waltz’s works, *Theory of International Politics*, and especially “A Response to My Critics”, where Waltz does not respond to the move to the metatheoretical level on which Ashley’s critique is pitched.

## 2. A power analysis with a dyad of concepts

This final section deals with the fallacies inherent in possible overextensions of the concept of power and proposes a solution that distinguishes between two *concepts*, power and governance, that must be put together in a comprehensive power *analysis*.

### 2.1. Overload fallacies of structural power

The three following fallacies illustrate the impossibility of limiting power phenomena to a single concept at either the agent or the structure level. The first fallacy is trying to extend an agent concept to cover all power phenomena. This problem is linked to the concept of human agency itself. Following Dennis Wrong, the fallacy consists of not distinguishing between intentional and non-intentional action. By failing to make this distinction (and by not reserving the exercise of power for intentional and responsible action), one inevitably makes the effect of power coincide with human action. For this reason Wrong limits the concept of power to the capacity to produce intended effects including unintended, but foreseen, *side-effects*.<sup>46</sup> Unforeseen effects are considered important for any analysis in social science and part of a more general concept of influence, but are not generally considered relevant to the concept of power as such. Yet, foresight does not seem to be a good criterion for the distinction of power relations from general agency because it would result in giving too much emphasis to the viewpoint of those who exercise power as opposed to those who have to bear its consequences.<sup>47</sup> Morriss's argument remains valid at this point; if one conceives of power as a way of "effecting," as Wrong also does, then unintended effects must be included.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the initial problem remains: how to avoid collapsing all power phenomena into agency? Lukes, aware of this difficulty and the shortcomings of intentionalist approaches, starts by saying that the "effecting" must be considered significant for a particular reason (and is therefore contestable). His distinctive criterion is not intention and its link to responsibility, but "interest-furthering". Yet this approach points to the second possible fallacy of structural power as impersonal empowering: pluralists refuse it because it would entail the "power-as-benefit fallacy". Deducing power from positive effects produces the anomaly of the free rider, whose interests are furthered by the system but who remains

<sup>46</sup> Dennis H. Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 3-5.

<sup>47</sup> See also J.M. Barbalet, "Power, Structural Resources, and Agency," *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 8 (1987), pp. 1-24, in particular p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> One of the reasons for the reluctance to incorporate nonintentional power is the relationship between the concepts of power and responsibility in agent-oriented theories. It seems, however, to be going too far to conclude that since it is difficult to assess responsibility in cases where unintended effects have been produced, such effects must necessarily be excluded from power analyses. The extent of responsibility must be judged case by case. For both the intended and unintended consequences of action, the capacity to effect an outcome (i.e. power) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for an actor's responsibility. See chap. 3.

nevertheless at its mercy. It seems odd to describe the free rider as necessarily powerful.<sup>49</sup>

Even more carefully developed individualist approaches suffer from this shortcoming. Morriss, for instance, explicitly attempts to include such impersonally produced effects. For this purpose, he introduces the notion of *passive power* to account for the cases where we “don’t want to differentiate between people who *do* get something and people who *can* get it, but we want to distinguish these people from those who *cannot* get it.” Morriss then defines *passive power* as being “passive in both senses: no choice is involved because you *could not* intervene to prevent the outcome occurring; it would come about *in spite of* anything you might do.”<sup>50</sup> This illustrates the benefit-fallacy: deduce power from rewards.<sup>51</sup> Morriss accepts the charge, yet considers it beside the point:

There is no need to claim that because someone benefits she must cause her good fortune, nor that she can control it. All one need do is note that a status quo that systematically benefits certain people (as Polsby agrees it does) is relevant in itself. (...) Yet if the social system performs in such a way as systematically to advantage some individuals or groups, it certainly seems odd not to take account of this.<sup>52</sup>

I agree that it would be a great mistake in an empirical analysis of a specific outcome to neglect how the structural bias on the normative, institutional, or economic level affects the very way power relations are built up, conceived, understood, and decided. But why must we take account of it by integrating it into the concept of power as such, especially if we refuse, as Morriss does, the argument of power as a subcategory of cause? Impersonal effect or structural bias may be part of any power *analysis*, but cannot be part of the *concept* of power if the latter is actor-based, as in the case of the pluralists’ relational conception or Morriss’s dispositional one.

The third fallacy represents a mirror image of the first one, namely, a form of structural reductionism. All the approaches considered so far take into account the policy-contingency framework, or whatever the authors prefer to call the contextual part of their analysis. The notion of impersonal power seems to require a founding outside the agent, not within the person’s intention (in the narrow behavioral approach) or action (in the wider individualist approach). This has provoked major critiques. By not sufficiently stressing the fundamental agent reference of power, so runs the criticism, the concept of power becomes either synonymous with structural constraint, thus rendering structural power a contradiction in terms, or else it becomes a rather amorphous all-encompassing concept like social control.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory*, p. 208.

<sup>50</sup> Morriss, *Power*, p.100. In both quotes the emphasis is original.

<sup>51</sup> See also Brian Barry, “The Uses of ‘Power’,” in Brian Barry, *Democracy, Power and Justice*, p. 315.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power*, pp. 106, 105.

<sup>53</sup> For the first charge, see Steven Lukes, *Essays in Social Theory*, p. 9; and for the second, Dennis Wrong, *Power: its Forms, Bases, and Uses*, p. 252.

This critique stems from writers whose concept of power rests on a rather strong concept of agency, as, for instance, in the agency assumptions of rational-choice theories (desires, beliefs, preferences, rationality, choices) or, in a different vein, as in the case of Lukes, for whom power becomes attached to personal autonomy and the moral discourse of freedom and justice. Both approaches retain, on the other hand, a very thin concept of structure. Obviously, if structures are just seen as constraints, then structural power is a contradiction in terms. But this is due not to a supposedly inherent agency reference for power phenomena, but to an insufficient conceptualisation of structures.

The solution must include an idea of structures as not constraining but enabling or facilitating. In one attempt to rescue a concept of structural power that is not a contradiction in terms, Hugh Ward distinguishes between power derived from two different kinds of resources.<sup>54</sup> Some resources are personal in the sense that they activate individual-specific relations. Other resources, however, are due to a general setting that makes no distinction among agents from the same category. These structural resources enable actors or facilitate their actions. They thus differ from personal resources, and control over them can be called, as Ward suggests, structural power.

This reconceptualisation of structure is still unsatisfactory. Ward uses the perfect market as his model. The market model can account for the enabling feature of structures only through the provision of resources that agents can use to alter their abilities. The assumption of perfect competition never calls into question the origin and maintenance, that is, reproduction of market positions. The strength of economic analysis is its understanding of the market dynamics of the established actors. It is still not convincing for the explanation of growth, economic development, or the dynamics of creating competitive advantages. Yet, once one accepts that structures are inherently biased for this reason and tend to reproduce such biases, it becomes clear that one must conceive structures more dynamically. One must in fact expand the small structuralist account of a logic of the market not reducible to agency to one of markets as institutions that work with and through a specific set of intersubjective rules and practices. These structures constitute power practices that are continually allocating and reallocating agents to categories that are differently affected by the working of the bias. After all, not everyone is, say, an employer, and *not everyone can or is empowered to be*. Whereas agent concepts are compelled simply to treat this as fate, structural constraint, or (poor) luck, it seems more reasonable to set up a power analysis in which empirical scrutiny determines whether it is in fact a question of luck or power.

Thus, whereas Morriss's solution, passive power, was questionable due to its attempt to integrate bias into the *concept* of power, Ward's proposal is insufficient because it leaves the systematic furthering of specific interests out of the entire power *analysis* by reducing impersonal empowering to the control of preexisting structural resources.

<sup>54</sup> Hugh Ward, "Structural Power - a Contradiction in Terms?" *Political Studies* 35 (4/1987), pp. 593-610.

## 2.2. Power analysis between agent power and impersonal governance

There is a seemingly easy theoretical solution to this problem. Not one, but two concepts are necessary to account for the range of power phenomena, namely (agent-)power and governance. This solution avoids concealing the agent-structure tension within the concept, as Morriss does, or reducing empowering to an objective and general constraint/opportunity, as happens with Ward. This implies a shift away from an economic to an intersubjective and constructivist approach, but the substantial problem of the agent-structure divide remains.

The choice of using “power” as the agent referent of power phenomena and “governance” as the intersubjective referent is conventional. One could have chosen either to use another set of words or to follow Michel Foucault and reserve the concept of power for the impersonal part of power phenomena.<sup>55</sup> My decision is to follow more common (English-language) usage and reserve the concept of power for the agent level. In such cases, power concepts have often been accompanied by more impersonal concepts taken from the family of authority.<sup>56</sup>

This dyad of concepts needs a particular theory of agency and structure. With regard to agent power, it requires a dispositional conceptualisation of power as a capacity of effecting, that is transforming, resources, which affects social relationships.<sup>57</sup> Using power as a dispositional concept can account for the first two meanings of structural power.

Governance can then be defined as the capacity of intersubjective practices to effect. This includes both the *social construction of options* that is at the heart of the Gramscian analysis, and the *routine mobilising of bias* that affects social relationships, more present in poststructuralist writings. For all their differences, they both conceive cooperation not just as a phenomenon of an instrumentalist relation, where one looks for the best way to “cooperate under anarchy” or where the regimes, as an outcome of this instrumentalist cooperation, influence the brute clash of forces beyond the resulting invisible hand of the balance of power. Order is conceived of not only as the result of individual forces of will, but also as the prior constitution of these forces. The structured international realm is also always a form of society/order/system in which agents are constituted - and not just the other way around. This could be exemplified by the way international discourse on development and its agencies have constructed the particular problematique of develop-

<sup>55</sup> The French language distinguishes between *puissance* (latin *potentia*) and *pouvoir* (latin *potestas*), where the first term refers to a potential or ability and the second to an act. Moreover, *Pouvoir* is also used to denote centralized power or government. Foucault’s insistence on the diffusion of power is explicable as a countermove to a traditional conception of sovereign (i.e. centralized) power.

<sup>56</sup> See especially Steven Lukes, “Power and authority,” In T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet, eds., *A History of Sociological Analysis* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 633-76.

<sup>57</sup> For a recent and similar definition of power, see Heikki Patomäki, “Concepts of ‘Action’, ‘Structure’ and ‘Power’ in ‘Critical Social Realism’: A Positive and Reconstructive Critique”, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1991), p. 234.

ment and the so-called Third Worlder who needs to be developed.<sup>58</sup> It is then under this recognised identity that these agents are *empowered* or *disempowered* to take part in international relations.

Poststructuralists would insist that governance for this reason is not necessarily something material to be attached to some persons and not to others, but a diffused process passing through agents.<sup>59</sup> It is reproduced and realised via practices, habits, dispositions, and sometimes even through the construction of the agents's identity (see Figure 6.1, Figure 6.2). Therefore, one must resist the attempt to invariably "individualise" the origins of power, the genesis of the produced effects. This individualisation - necessary for blaming agents - begins to appear deceptive when one analyses governance. There the discourse of individual blame is simply misplaced.<sup>60</sup>

Allowing for a wide approach to power phenomena does not, however, entail acceptance of all the power approaches presented above. The proposed solution explicitly excludes power analyses that argue for a restriction to an agent-based power concept, for they are compelled to avoid the power-as-benefit fallacy by introducing not a second concept of the power family but a random concept: luck. Keith Dowding's rational-choice approach to power has gone so far as to acknowledge the systematic interest-furthering that pushed Morriss to conceive of passive power. Quite consistently, he must then treat it as systematic luck. This concept refers to the privileges and advantages that stem from the social position of specific actors, but for which they apparently did nothing.<sup>61</sup> By reducing systematic bias to a question of luck, this approach leaves out of the picture the daily practices of agents that help to reproduce the very system and positions from which these advantages of the lucky are derived. This means that the social reproduction can be understood as a ritual of power that not only rests on those who benefit from the system but also needs all those who, via their conscious or unconscious practices, help to sustain it. There is no prime mover. Power lies both in the relational interaction of agents and in the systematic rule that results from the consequences of their actions. To quote Foucault, "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does."<sup>62</sup> Routine actions can constitute rituals of power that suggest the realm of the possible. They construct (and deconstruct) the horizon of the thinkable and feasible that continuously enframes agency and preempts or co-opts

<sup>58</sup> Marc DuBois, "The Governance of the Third World: A Foucauldian Perspective on Power Relations in Development", *Alternatives*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1991), pp. 1-30.

<sup>59</sup> This applies for both of Michel Foucault's later periods. See for the 1970s, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 31-34; and for the 1980s, James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, eds., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), in particular pp. 18-20.

<sup>60</sup> For a critique of this unwelcome "interference of conspiracy theory," see Ole Wæver, *Tradition and Transgression in International Relations: A Post-Ashleyan Position*, Working Paper no. 24/1989 (Copenhagen: Center for Conflict and Peace Research, 1989), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Keith Dowding, *Rational Choice and Political Power*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 187.

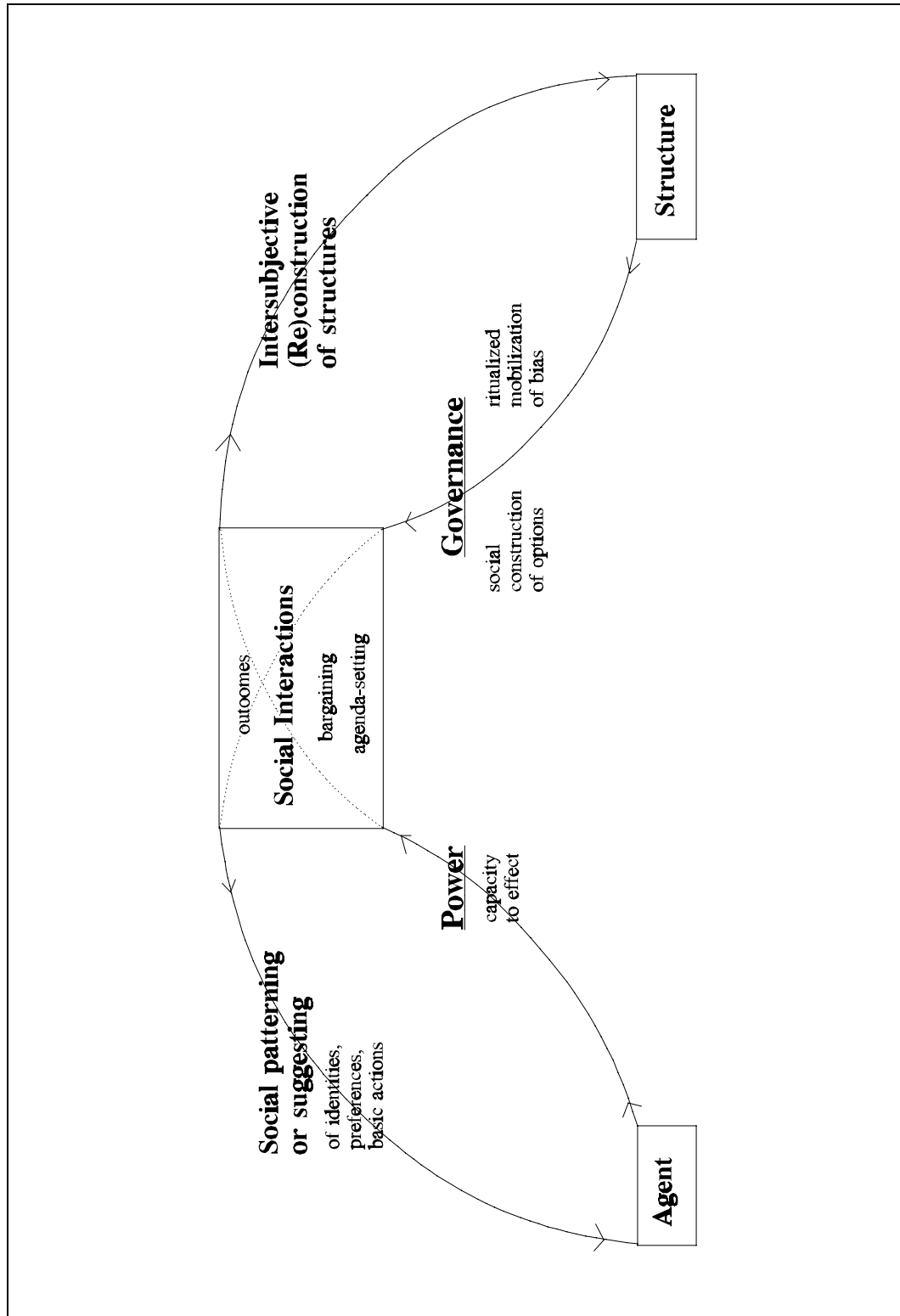


Figure 6.2 A dyadic conceptualisation of power phenomena

alternative discourses and practices.

Power *analysis* as the comprehensive account of power phenomena must call into question the relationship between the different forms of power and of governance.

By focusing on power, one needs, for instance, to integrate an analysis of governance via the social patterning of structures. Social interactions mobilise rules for agenda-setting that privilege specific agents, that is, the agent's actual power in a bargain is fostered by the system's governance. This is done neither through direct bargaining nor via indirect institutional agenda-setting. Only in this way can the power of the German Bundesbank in the above-mentioned example be fully understood. Thus with a dyad of concepts, one can account for Strange's concept of structural power, which she sees as more than the "power to set the agenda of discussion or to design (in American phraseology) the international 'regime' of rules and customs."<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, by focusing on governance, one needs to conceptualise power via the way the identities of agents are constantly redefined. This Foucauldian theme about the intersubjective constitution of agency might appear farfetched in times of stability. Yet in periods of apparent transition and of an elusive agent and power, Foucault's ideas might be particularly interesting. Just as in Foucault's research program about the constitution of the modern self, so in international theory, there is a research program about contemporary agency. Moreover, it seems that (1) the constitution of firms, individuals, and nations (not states), for example, as international agents, (2) their definition, and (3) their recognition are resisted by the (realist) international community. Neorealism's inherent conservative bias can at times be healthy but is more and more resented as a disciplinary ritual whose effect consists of marginalising alternative thought and politics. In other words, in times of an "international" apparently in transition, the theory most resistant to the analysis of change predicts as most probable an eternal return of anarchy. It thereby counters the constitution of recognised international agency and *thus the latter's power*. An analysis of this doxic power of Neorealism can identify this discourse, its bearers (academics and statesmen) and bring them under a general power analysis.

### **2.3. Consequences for the study of power phenomena in contemporary IR and IPE**

This reconceptualisation of power and governance substantiates already existing critiques of Neorealism. Through a conceptual analysis of power that integrates power and governance, Neorealism's lack of historicity and its consequent legitimisation of status quo power relations can be exposed.

To illustrate the first point, let us again take Krasner's concept of meta-power. Krasner conceptualises regimes as an influence on outcomes, that is, as something linked to the power base, but with a time lag. In this way, he used regimes and normative struc-

<sup>63</sup> Susan Strange, "The persistent myth of lost hegemony", *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987), p. 565.



tures as possible resources of power and their potential control as a form of power, namely meta-power. In this context the normative structure becomes an object, similar to material sources, on which to dwell.<sup>64</sup> This reduction of regimes to objects makes it possible to analyze the structural environment as given constraints and opportunities, and not as something that is being continually reshaped by the historically constituted and intersubjectively reproduced societal biases.

In a similar vein, Waltz's formulation practically rules out change at the structural level. By limiting structural change to the first level (anarchy vs. hierarchy) and by defining anarchy as the lack of international government, the model constructs a thinking space for change in only one direction. There is change if and only if power becomes concentrated in the hands of one actor and if and only if this hegemony produces a unique sovereignty. This leaves untouched the constitution of the realm we take for granted as international and its significant changes.<sup>65</sup> As the preceding discussion has shown, to account for governance asks, however, for a focus on the social construction of such relations and, indeed, of the identity of the relevant actors.<sup>66</sup> Thus, a dyadic power analysis will inevitably problematise the basic anarchy/sovereignty distinction on which Neorealism is built.<sup>67</sup> In response to Waltz's poor account of change, recent attempts have tried to integrate change at the second tier of Waltz's Neorealism.<sup>68</sup> Yet, as long as they leave the historicity of the formal dichotomy of anarchy and sovereignty untouched, circularly defined and reified, this project does not remove the basic shortcoming. With many above-mentioned authors who conceptualised structural power, a dyadic power analysis points to a nonformalistic understanding of an international system of rule beyond the "anarchy problematique".

The static concept of structure in economic approaches also explains why Krasner and Caporaso, although referring to the same literature, develop two different concepts of structural power that derive from the ambiguity in Bacharach and Baratz's approach. Krasner, starting from an intentional choice-theoretical approach sees *today* regimes as given and conceives of power relations only where intentional attempts to change an existing regime can be detected: the Third World against the international liberal regime (assuming such a thing exists). Yet, regimes are not only a means (as for Krasner) for power relations but are, as Caporaso shows, in fact "effecting" exactly such power

<sup>64</sup> In other words, the reduction of regimes to *objects* clashes with an implicit shift to an intersubjective ontology, see Kratochwil and Ruggie, "International Organization...", pp. 764-65.

<sup>65</sup> For a criticism of Waltz's neorealism as unable to account for the change from the medieval to the modern system, see the writings of John G. Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis," in Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics*, pp. 131-57; and also in "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations", *International Organization*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 139-74.

<sup>66</sup> See Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It", p. 397.

<sup>67</sup> For a thorough appraisal of the concept of "sovereignty," see the writings of R.B.J. Walker, e.g. "State Sovereignty and the Articulation of Political Space/Time, pp. 445-61.

<sup>68</sup> See Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy*.

relations. Had Krasner from the beginning of his analysis included a problematisation and historicisation of the impersonally empowered status quo, that is used a dyad of concepts, this restricted view would not have happened.<sup>69</sup> As a result, Krasner's analysis and Neorealist power analysis in general itself *tend to normalise specific power relations, namely the unvoiced power of the status quo*.

Thus, and this is the second important point, these very practices of power analysis and power politics are part of an ongoing reshaping and reproduction of legitimate discourses and politics. This implies that the whole power analysis should be conceived of as an intersubjective one. Individual power, understood as ability, is couched in an environment that is not just any objective regime or a position in the market/balance of power, but an intersubjective realm where rituals of power continuously set the stage.

It seems reasonable to expect that this impersonal empowering should be part of any power-analysis. It could not in fact *coherently* be part of a choice-theoretical version of Realism, of an individualist dispositional power approach, or of any approach that objectivises regimes, balances of power, and/or markets.

Therefore, this power analysis characterised by a dyad of concepts can claim not only to avoid some traditional logical fallacies of power concepts but also to retain the major insights present in concepts of structural power. Its task is not to argue that either power or governance or both are always the most significant criteria for the explanation of an event. Given particular that are coherent with the foregoing conceptualisation, this is to be judged empirically case by case. But it makes the claim that conceptualisations that do not unnecessarily exclude power phenomena from the construction of research hypotheses should be preferred, because they place fewer constraints on the questions to be asked and answers to be found in empirical analysis.

### 3. Conclusion: Purposes and meanings of power and governance

As I have argued, recent concepts of power have endeavored to widen the scope of power analysis to include the three features we have met in the conceptualisation of structural power: power as indirect institutional, unintended, or impersonally created effects. These attempts to use *power* to account for an international system of governance or hierarchy or authority highlight the insufficiencies of the concept of anarchy as it is used in traditional IR and IPE theory. *Governance* points to the systematic understatement of effective rule, of authority relations at the international level where the concept of sovereignty in a system of self-help might not meaningfully matter anymore. This has profound consequences for the articulation of Neorealist theory. In a system of self-help,

<sup>69</sup> For a convincing account of the dynamics of power positions, that accounts for Caporaso's and Krasner's frameworks as different stages of power institutionalisations and struggles, see John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 21.

the ruling of the international system is simply the result of the clashing of national powers. The international order is made out of the hierarchy of state forces. Therefore in Realist theory, national power(s) become(s) the central variable in explanations. Leaving the system of self-help to whatever a structured or functionally differentiated system entails, however, that power alone is no longer able to explain the “logic” of the international system. This is the central insight of regime theory. Yet all the Neorealist extensions of the concept of power that are aimed at preserving its central explanatory role have been unsuccessful in integrating important features of a comprehensive power analysis, as shown with respect to the three meanings of structural power.

Instead of increasingly widening the concept of power, I propose a dyad of concepts, keeping power as an actor-based dispositional concept and not subsuming governance under it. Power analysis is about exactly this link between agent capacities and systematic ruling and cannot be reduced to any of them.

This kind of power analysis prepares the ground for a better understanding of the dynamics of the international system, the political responsibilities therein, and the possible places for change. Since it relies also on an impersonal concept of governance, it is, however, only under severe conditions to be used for the moral purpose of blaming particular actors. It applies much better to the practical purpose of preparing for unintended effects and for redefining the borders of the *a priori* politically feasible. The basic reason to preserve a widened power analysis is hence the purpose typical for conceptualisation of power, namely the redefinition of the boundaries of what can be called a political, i.e. changeable issue. Although the relation between power and governance is far from explaining every single outcome, it does not exclude power phenomena *a priori*. Rather, it leaves the assessment of possible short-term and long-term political action to the empirical case. The governance of the system and its identification of powers are not taken for granted, but its pattern of change is examined via the long-term strategies that were or were not used to influence it. This power analysis does not deny a realm of necessity but allows for a wider conception of political action. Particularly for Realists, who tend to believe that politics is the art of the possible, this power analysis points to a wider realm of the possible.

**Part IV**

**Neorealist  
Power Analysis of  
the Second Gulf War**

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## Introduction to Part IV

The empirical illustration pursues three main aims. First, the application of power concepts to a particular case is intended to show the theoretically established limits of the Neorealist concept of power. Thus, in a first step, a Neorealist story of the case will be constructed, the use of power analysed, its limits assessed (Part IV). Second, wider concepts of power and a dyadic power analysis will be used to construct a different story of the case. This story sheds light on the implications both of power for the understanding of an empirical case, and of the case for the understanding of power in contemporary international affairs (Part V). This leads to the third and final aim which is to indicate what cannot be accounted for by a power analysis, however comprehensively conceived (General conclusion). This is a crucial point of the whole investigation. If one of the underlying ideas of this thesis is that the economic mode of explanation on which Neorealism is built provides a too narrow picture of power, the second main idea is that even more satisfactory concepts of power cannot provide a comprehensive explanation. In other words, power analysis leaves things unexplained; a theory of power is no shorthand for a social theory.

The two stories should be read with a double reference in mind. On the one hand, Part V is a critique of power analysis if it is purely individualistic. On the other hand, my own dyadic conceptualisation reserves an agent concept of power. Hence, Part IV will be at times shifting between the general Neorealist account and a dispositional concept of agent power. Although I shall indicate where the two stories part ways, I admit that it is a problem for exposition. I left the story in the Neorealist account, because I could not criticise its internal logic, if I started directly with my story. If I presented both successively, a lot of empirical material would be redundant. Thus I hope the reader will excuse me and read Part IV with this double context in mind. It will be taken up in the chapter 15.

The usefulness and limits of the concept and analysis of power will be shown by means of an empirical *illustration*. The wording is important. This cannot claim to be a “case study”, because there is no original empirical material which is presented here for the first time. Instead, it relies entirely on a critical reading of secondary literature. This empirical illustration cannot and does not claim to give a comprehensive account of the origins, dynamics and effects of the last Gulf War. Neither would a Neorealist analyst do. Since the Middle East is such an intricate subsystem of the global political economy, this must be left to an internationally informed area specialist.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of a “typical” case for Neorealism (and Realism), namely the outbreak of a war, should make it a fair case to judge Neorealism by means of its power analysis. Yet the different concepts of power and governance make a precisely focused comparison impossible. The comparison will have to rely on the construction of two different empirical research programmes and consequently two different stories of the Second Gulf

<sup>1</sup> There is already the difficulty with the clear geographical boundary of the area. The English term “Middle East” comprises the entire Arab world plus Turkey, Iran and Israel. In other words, it refers to what the French refer to as *Maghreb*, *Machrek*, *Proche-Orient* and *Moyen-Orient*.

War. Thus, there cannot be a comparative study where the story comes first, followed by the relevant questions and an appraisal of the different answers given by the respective theories.

Neorealist analysis will present a first version of the Second Gulf War. As analysed in chapter 5, the Neorealist approach not only relies on a specific conceptual definition of power, but also on particular assumption on the working of power. Thus, before we can follow the three steps of a security study (and apprehend the role of power therein), the underlying *security* and *power assumptions* need to be specified. These assumptions have long seemed self-evident to IR scholars, but only if they are explicitly kept in mind does the articulation of the analysis become coherent.

Since the power analysis which underlies Neorealism is not a comprehensive explanatory framework, a Neorealist account using power needs to be supplemented. I have chosen to use a regional security account. This does, however, not imply that all which follows can be imputed to such a regional security analysis. For a hard core structural Realist, the geopolitical distribution is most prominent in the explanation of outcomes, whereas a security analysis integrates questions of enmity/amity. Yet, these are part of the Realist programme and are certainly compatible with, if not underlying, the approaches by Baldwin, Keohane and Nye. The security analysis proceeds in three steps: the origins of the conflict (chapter 8) its dynamics and outcomes (chapter 9), and its long-term security effects (chapter 10).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A short note on wording. In the literature, the last Gulf War is variously named. Since “crisis” is a central concept in Foreign Policy Analysis, it will be used in its usual sense. The shorthand of the “Gulf War” will be avoided, since it may conflate with the 1981-1988 Iran-Iraq war which was called “Gulf War” at the time. The expressions “First Gulf War” and “Second Gulf War” refer respectively to the Iran-Iraq war, and to the time from the invasion in Kuwait till the armistice. Generically, the wording of “Gulf Conflict” will be used for the Second war, starting from the invasion, the following crisis, the allied military response and the post-war diplomacy.

# 7

## Neorealist Power Assumptions



### 1. The “logic” of power: “collateral pressure” and “osmosis”

Three major kinds of power assumptions can be distinguished in Neorealist analysis. The first is a kind of “objective” power assumptions. It is one of the physicist analogies which underlie all those Realist discourses that drive for an automatic or mechanistic role of the distribution of power for the understanding of stasis (equilibrium) and change. This kind of underlying assumption is necessary especially for a systemic Realist approach, because it reserves a special and primordial place to the so-called “structural” level independent of unit-level intentions. Automatism gives Neorealism its explanatory power, that is, it is the base from which determinacy in its explanation derives. Since some automatic adjustments of power can be anticipated, they should be the foundation of the national security analysis and foreign policy elaborations, traditionally called the “national interest.” The policy message is clear: omitting the logic of power can be suicidal.

Two objective power assumptions can be distinguished. The first is mostly used in contexts of territorial adjustments, that is strictly military power. It can be called “collateral pressure”.<sup>1</sup> The image is the following. Imagine a recipient of power (country) in a flexible container. Its internal pressure (power) pushes collaterally on other recipients. If the collateral pressure is higher than the one of these other bodies, then the flexible container will expand - exactly till its internal pressure (declining via its expansion) is equilibrated by the pressures around (mounting via their contraction). In Realist terms this means that borders and territories will be readjusted until national powers (calculated implicitly as the ratio of power to territory) are balanced.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to an idea in some ways reminiscent, but different from the “lateral pressure” model originated by North and Choucri, and developed by Richard Ashley. See Richard K. Ashley, *The Political Economy of War and Peace: The Sino-Soviet-American Triangle and the Modern Security Problematique* (London: Pinter, 1980).



Thus, change in the sense of territorial expansion via collateral pressure also implies a decline of the internal power pressure. This implicit assumption now underlies most prominently US critiques of the “Imperial overstretch”, that is the tendency of Empires to overextend and thus lose power, to implode, until a just equilibrium between power and Empire (territorial extension) is found.

However, this implies that pressure and power can be used interchangeably when in fact they should not be. Imperial overstretch need not diminish power as such, but through increasing extension, might only diminish the pressure of power. Even within the argument of Hegemonic Stability Theory, a hegemonic decline does not necessarily mean a decline in the hegemon’s power, but rather a decline in its pressure, which, in real political terms, means expansionism. The hegemonic decline thesis must therefore show that the end of expansion is not a sign of constant power whose pressure is eventually equilibrated, but actually represents a decline in power. This is, of course, very hypothetical, because the whole argument derives from assumptions (about power) and not from empirical tests.

The second “objective” power assumption is used in those situations where no territorial adjustments seem necessary for a state to expand. The flexible outer skin of the body becomes in fact permeable. Here, the pressure is equilibrated not by expanding bodies, but by letting their contained items pass the border. This means that whenever there appears to be a “power vacuum”, it inevitably asks to be filled by the strongest actor, often in fact called “power” as a shorthand. Expansion is here the result of a diminution of the power-level in the environment. The main metaphor is the natural tendency of liquids to equal their levels in contiguous recipients. One of the most literary (and powerful) examples of such an argument can be found in the article of “Mr.X”, published originally in 1947. George F. Kennan did not believe in a military or territorial threat of the USSR. He was rather afraid that the long “shades of the Kremlin” would effect resignation and self-surrender in Central and Western Europe:

Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, whenever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power.<sup>2</sup>

Following this image, the assumption could be called the “osmosis of power”. It is fundamental for all those Balance of Power theories which postulate an automatic adjustment process — and which have spurred the most sarcastic criticisms (see chapter 4). But no Neorealist would rely only on this systemic assumption. There are more “unit-level” assumptions that retranslate this general tendency in behavioural terms.

<sup>2</sup> George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, in his *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 118.

## 2. Relational “securities”

An additional assumption is more subjective. International anarchy signifies a constant perception of insecurity on the level of international actors. This is considered a point of instability. Consequently, Neorealist analysis is based on the dynamic assumption that actors have a drive to acquire security, which first and foremost means *survival*. Since war is the biggest threat to survival, the achievement of military security is, so Realism argues, the bases of any national interest. Indeed, the ultimate primacy of military factors is based on their potential to “quickly and decisively dominate outcomes”.<sup>3</sup> But as argued in Part III, survival or security can only in particular consequences be reduced to military means.

Hence, Barry Buzan in particular has widened the concept of security in its definition and its scope. Although he does not explicitly state it, he historicises the otherwise too general concept of security. Historicisation means here the *observer’s* attempt to derive the content of “security” from an empirical awareness of those issues where international actors act as if security were at stake. This changes over time. Thus, security should be seen in its specific historical context. As a result of today’s global political economy, he distinguishes five different fields of security.

Military security concerns the two-level interplay of armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states’ perceptions of each other’s intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the abilities of society to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom within acceptable conditions for evolution. Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend. These five sectors do not operate in isolation from another. Each defines a focal point within the security problematique, and a way of ordering priorities, but all are woven together in a strong web of linkages.<sup>4</sup>

This is a very concise synthesis of a Realist Interdependentist approach. Although Keohane and Nye reorganised the field around a new definition of power and Buzan around a new approach to security, they both overlap in several respects.

Firstly, Keohane and Nye derived their concept of power from two kinds of “interdependence”, vulnerability and sensibility, where power came to mean the control of resources that could (via interdependence) significantly affect the other actor. Their general argument was that with rising interdependence, the fields in which power could

<sup>3</sup> See respectively: Robert Keohane & Joseph Nye jr. *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); and Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, Elzbieta Tromer and Ole Wæver, *The European Security Order Recast. Scenarios for the Post-Cold War Era* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Barry Buzan, “New patterns of global security in the twenty-first century”, *International Affairs* (London), vol. 67, no. 3 (1991), p. 433.

be exercised expanded. Buzan's approach, although coined in security terms, derives from this same apprehension of interdependence. Unwittingly, his definitions of security are all coined in "power from interdependence" terms. Military security derives from interdependence in survival and focuses on the means (power resources) necessary to achieve it. Political security focuses on the mutual interdependence for the organisational capacity (power) to pursue (centralised, aggregated) politics. Economic security is understood in a rather typical neomercantilist way as being about the control of access or denial to resources (power) necessary to sustain wealth and state (political and military) power. Societal security concerns the "abilities" (power) of a society to sustain self-reproduction, and finally environmental security is the control over the very possibility of action, in particular local or future action.

Secondly, once these different sources of insecurity are acknowledged, this is linked to an actor-centred analysis that apprehends which actor controls what set of resources that can influence the interdependent security in different sectors. Typically, Realism *aggregated* the sources to an "overall" power assessment of actors. As we have already seen in Baldwin's approach and in the Interdependence debate, this has been criticised for the lacking "fungibility" of power. Consequently, not linear aggregation, but *linkage* becomes the way to comprehensively apprehend an actor's power.

Thus, the stress on relational security carries no further information than the stress on a relational concept of power. Both assess inductively the historical contingency of power.<sup>5</sup> It may be that the stress on security makes the double analogy with a neoclassical economic approach clearer: it is both between money and power, and between overall utility and the National Interest understood as security. It shows why there has been a widespread tendency to consider power both as a means and as an end of foreign policy: it is a means to achieve security, but security itself is defined in terms of power. In an attempt to avoid tautology, at this point, Realism switches back and forth between this unit-level analysis and the systemic level, where an *equilibrium* of power implies security.

To summarise, the subjective power assumption stresses the aims of policy actions (under anarchy) and the points of equilibrium, i.e. stability. It thereby provides both the individual motives for action and the overall framework for understanding the action's effects. This first subjective assumption can now be supplemented by specific behavioural assumptions.

### 3. Behavioural assumptions

To recapitulate, Realism is characterised by the idea that as long as there is a perceived gap between the actual power of actors and their control of a corresponding section of world politics (via direct influence like territorial occupations or via indirect control of valuable resources), readjustments will continuously hamper the system's stability. What

<sup>5</sup> See also Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 64.

“corresponding” in fact means is empirically and historically checked by the outcomes of contests, including war. This assumption is said to derive not from an abstract theory, but from the analyses of crises and wars where states have behaved and conceived their behaviour exactly on these grounds. It is an empirical generalisation — a matter of fact, as it were.

Two behavioural patterns (at the “unit-level”) derive from this, one of individual and one of collective action. The assumption about *individual action* is partly concerned with the reasons for the individual or state change of power, but more importantly with the motivations to put power changes into practice. At this point the choice-theoretical formulation of Neorealism translates the assumption of “osmosis” into individual action. There exist at least two versions of it. They reflect the two slightly different rationalist bases upon which Neorealism rests, one more objectivist, and one more intentionalist.

Following the more objectivist choice-theoretical formulation, Robert Gilpin argues that, as long as the expected costs are lower than the expected benefits, states are motivated to expand territorially, economically, and politically.

2. A state will attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs (i.e. if there is an expected net gain).
3. A state will seek to change the international system through territorial, political, and economic expansion until the marginal costs of further change are equal to or greater than the marginal benefits.<sup>6</sup>

This corresponds to the basic rationalist account of deterrence which is said to function whenever the possible gain from an attack is outweighed by the expected penalty. The penalty is the product of the highest sanction weighted by the probability of its application. Thus, even though the probability of the use of nuclear weapons is relatively low, its sanction is so inconceivably high that deterrence works. Hence, deterrence applies, if<sup>7</sup>:

$$V_{FS} - V_{SQ} < S \times P$$

$V_{FS}$  = expected final state,  
 $V_{SQ}$  = the status quo,  
 S = sanction, P = probability.

In other words, it is a cost-benefit formulation of the received Realist idea that power expands till it finds another matching power — which was the central idea of US containment policies after World War II.

<sup>6</sup> See hypotheses 2 and 3 of Robert Gilpin's version of Hegemonic Stability Theory in his *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 10 and developed in chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>7</sup> For the different equations of deterrence, see Jean-Louis Gergorin & Marisol Touraine, *Stratégie et Relations Internationales. De la guerre froide à la multipolarité* (Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Polycopié 1982-1983), pp. 161-164.

Following the more intentionalist and interactionist Neorealist approach, the behavioural assumption concentrates on the pursuit of security. “The pursuit of security”, more extensively conceived, then becomes the reformulated utility-function of the rationalist approach upon which Neorealism rests. It replaces the concept of national interest. Since traditionally the national interest was understood in terms of power, we first have to assess the relationship between relational power and security thus understood.

In the case of security, the discussion is about the pursuit of freedom from threat. When this discussion is in the context of the international system, security is about the abilities of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity. In seeking security, state and society are sometimes in harmony with each other, sometimes opposed. Its bottom line is about survival, but it also reasonably includes a substantial range of concern about the conditions of existence.<sup>8</sup>

Buzan’s concept of security has two characteristics. First, security means defence from *vulnerability*. Vulnerability applies whenever an actor does not have what is seen as adequate control over those resources which at that specific historical point in time are recognised as being linked to security. Vulnerabilities are thus inextricably linked to the *historically contingent fields of security*. Integrating the transnationalisation of politics, vulnerabilities apply not only to the external defence of a billiard ball, but also to the socio-political cohesion of a state. The government is sandwiched between external and domestic claims. If these claims have an effect on the government’s security, then Buzan speaks of threats, the second characteristic of security. Such threats are not always international. They can arise also from domestic actors, in particular in societal security. In a power-centred approach to International Relations, they enter the stage only to the extent that actions by foreign actors, whether transnational or government, are perceived as indirect threats pertaining to domestic vulnerabilities.

This reworking of security as a combination of given vulnerabilities and perceived threats leads to a relational and situational concept of security. It is relational, because the concept “vulnerability” refers to distribution of capacities in a way which makes one actor’s position precarious because of potential sanctions or threats from others. Vulnerabilities refer to the insufficient potential of actors to defend themselves from possible threat. Expressed in relational power terms, this means that an actor is dependent on another’s capacities to assure the pursuit of his interests. Vulnerability is asymmetrical interdependence that can be exploited. This is Keohane & Nye’s rationalist reworking of power as a relational concept. It is situational, because threats depend on the immediate environment within which the actor finds himself. Once again expressed in power terms, the threat capacity of an actor or its defence from threats derives from the control over

<sup>8</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed (New York *et al.*: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 18-19.

resources which effects the interests, i.e. as used here, the security, of other actors themselves characterised by a specific set of vulnerabilities.

Insecurity reflects a combination of threats and vulnerabilities, and the two cannot meaningfully be separated. If Poland is thought to be historically insecure, then not only must its vulnerabilities in terms of size, economic underdevelopment, political instability and indefensible boundaries be taken into account but also the threats posed to it by powerful, expansionist neighbours on either side ... The distinction between threats and vulnerabilities points to a key divide in security policy, namely that states can seek to reduce their insecurity either by reducing their vulnerability or by preventing or lessening threats.<sup>9</sup>

In a rationalist approach, we have thus replaced the pursuit of the national interest as the main utility function by the pursuit of a policy to reduce vulnerability and lessen or prevent threats to achieve security. As shown above, the understanding of vulnerability and threats are inextricably linked to a relational concept of power.<sup>10</sup> It follows that security policy, expressed in power terms, must aim at enhancing the control over those resources that historically and situationally affect the actors' interests, that is security. Security policy means freedom from threat through the enhancement of power as it is defined by the historical and the geopolitical context, and exercised via external, internal and transnational channels.

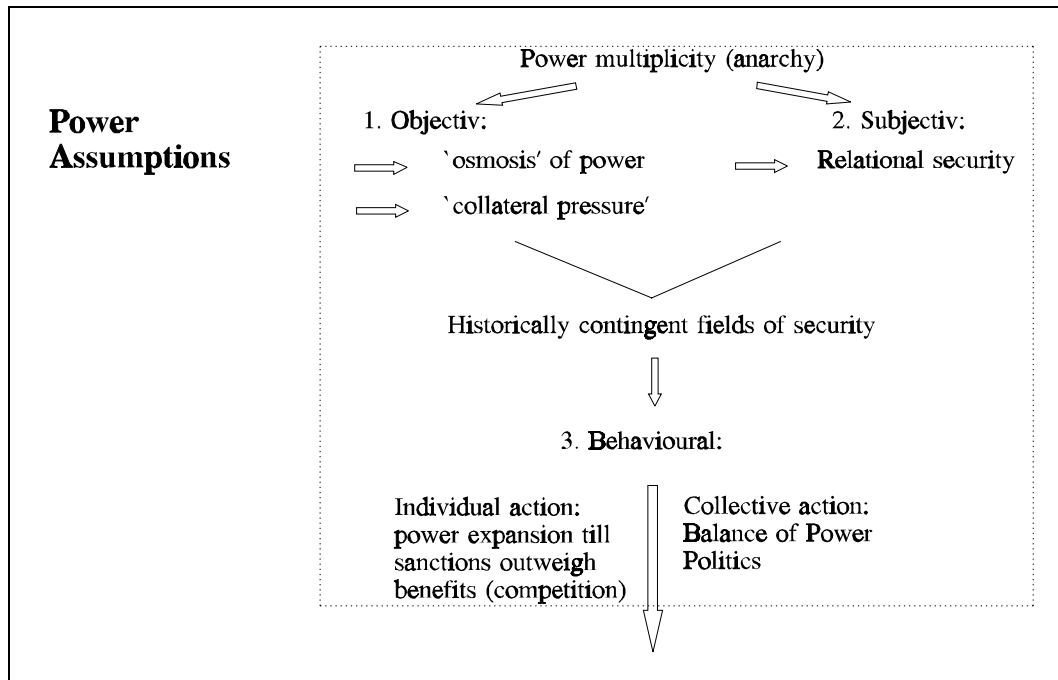
In this respect, a security-centred approach corresponds to the above-mentioned idea of Robert Gilpin, who speaks of a drive for "military, political and economic expansion", as long as others do not counteract. Yet, security analysis à la Buzan integrates more factors than balance of power theory. It coincides here with Stephen Walt's "balance of threats", where the balance of power theory is supplemented with a behavioural assumption: it is not the enhancement of power which triggers behaviour, but the perception of threats. Stephen Walt argues that threats are defined by the amount of power (conceived as capabilities), its offensive character (geared at specific vulnerabilities), and the intentions of its holder.<sup>11</sup> If Gilpin's description gives the general rule, the intentional Neorealist approach provides the necessary link from the systemic to the unit level.

On the level of collective action, this very rational cost-benefit calculus leads, of course, to the attempt to build alliances in order to avoid any single actor or alliance perceiving itself in a power advantage and thus being prompted to expand territorially or even politically by intimidating and coercing the other actors. In order to distinguish this from the concept of Balance of Power that refers to the tendency of the international system to equilibrate power differentials, this is generally called balance of power *policy*.

<sup>9</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, State, and Fear*, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Buzan uses a traditional realist concept of power linked to capabilities, especially military ones, for foreign defence.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 21-26; "Revolution and War", *World Politics*, vol. 44, no. 3 (April 1992), pp. 332-33.



**Figure 7.1** Power assumptions

Common to both basic behavioural assumption is, in other words, *competition* in search of an equilibrium. Once again, the wording reflects the seemingly easy analogy between economic and international (not national political) behaviour (For an overview of the assumptions, see Figure 7.1).

#### 4. Conclusion: Questions of a Neorealist Power-Analysis

With these assumptions in mind, a power-informed Neorealist analysis will construct a particular framework in order to understand empirical conflict and policy choices. As shown in the discussion of Baldwin's relational power analysis, the assessment of power (and thus also its distribution) requires the prior analysis of the historically contingent power resources, and the situationally contingent constellation of vulnerabilities. Since the Gulf conflict took place in one of the asserted regional subsystems of international relations, the first stage of Neorealist power analysis will describe the Middle Eastern "Security Complex".

This analytical tool allows us to analyse regional dynamics in the distribution of power, actor's threats, and intentions in their own right. This dynamic is autonomous, but not independent of the central balance of power. In Buzan's terminology, the link between the two is called "penetration", although, because regional dynamics can ricochet on the central balance, it would be better to describe it as interpenetration (if one likes this word). If the central balance's competition imposes its dynamics on regional systems, Buzan *et al.* speak of "overlay".

At this stage, the research programme will address questions which should help to characterise the central and regional balances — and thus also the basic question of what and who the relevant “powers” are. In other words, (1) what are the resources whose control provides security and that, if they affect the interests of others, can be used as threat or threat protection, (2) who controls them? Furthermore, the relational power approach will ask if power was conceived as overall power (Waltz) or as issue-specific power; was fungibility taken-for-granted or problematised? Then, the approach goes on to set out the linkages between issue-areas and between the different levels on which power shifts can affect outcomes: local-territorial, regional, and international. This background sets the stage for the understanding of the basic structure before the conflict. Here the *origins* of the Second Gulf War must be found.

Once the vulnerabilities and their distribution are known, the power analysis of a conflict will come to its second stage: the translation of capabilities into real influence over outcomes. This distinction of capabilities and influence is partly accepted, yet Baldwin insists that power resources that are shown to be inefficient should never have been counted as such. His attempt to preserve a conditional link between power and the control over outcomes is necessary to preserve the explanatory power of (Neo)Realism. The conditions are spelled out in a translation or conversion process, which underlies the analysis of the *conflict dynamic*. This analysis is done with the assumption of low fungibility. Relevant questions are, for instance, have “powers” succeeded in overcoming the “paradox of unrealised power”? How was the translation process from resources to power effecting understood? How was the threat/sanction capacity assessed? Was its dependence on the interplay of agents understood? Which are the regimes via which power was translated? What are the linkages between security sectors, between levels of balances?

The outcome of the conflict becomes the starting point of a *feedback dynamic* of the conflict on the different power structures and vulnerabilities of individual powers. Long-term dynamics can shift the historically contingent security sectors, i.e. add a new one (like the environmental sector) or weigh their respective significance for overall security differently. This must include an assessment of newly significant power resources which would affect all power calculus and balances.

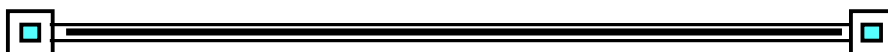
This feedback may rarely, and then only with difficulty be deduced from one (regional) conflict alone. More probable are, however, reevaluations of power resources during or through the conflict. Particular resources are seen to have proven more significant for the exploitation of vulnerabilities or the defence from threats than initially thought. Finally, the conflict will *per definition* affect the power distribution in the region, either via the physical destruction of power resources, or their changed distribution. Thus, the major questions are: Which is the new balance? What are the effects on individual powers? Have regimes been changed via the conflict? Which resources have been found most (least) applicable, which most (least) linkable? Was there any difference of this assessment before and after the events? To what was it attributed?



In conclusion, this analysis should lead to policy debates. How can higher security/order be achieved and larger conflicts avoided? What would have been and what will be the most rational policy to be pursued by the different powers? And for the more idealistically inclined: what would have been and what will be the most moral policy?

## 8

### Origins of the conflict: Power shifts in the Middle Eastern security complex



Realists see conflicts as the catalyst of an equilibration of power. They are both the effect of power shifts that have already happened and the origin of a new power constellation, the next equilibrium. Conflicts effect power shifts, because “powers” would not engage in a conflict if there was not a changed perception of the distribution of power, and thus of power. A changed perception, if it makes conflict possible, is a real change in power, because power is based not on its continuous exercise, but on its tacit acceptance.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the origins of a conflict have to be looked for in those security and power-related events that have caused a relatively or temporarily stable system to move.

The first thing Neorealist will be looking at are the possible shifts in international and/or regional balances of power. This approach has been expanded in more recent Neorealist writings to integrate questions of interdependence and regimes, i.e. the awareness that capabilities are channelled differently in separate issue-areas of international relations. This is the basic insight of all extensions to the anarchy problematique: Bull’s anarchical society, Aron’s homogeneous systems, Kissinger’s legitimate systems, and Wolfers’ pole of indifference (see chapter 4). The entire picture has been called a “Security Complex”.

If Neorealism’s analysis is carried out by purely geopolitical or structural Realists, this first move is sufficient. The rest is dumped to foreign policy analysis. Yet, as I repeatedly insisted and as some Neorealists acknowledge, economic theory combines assumptions about the unit and the system level. Shifts within the Security Complexes must have a correspondence in shifting unit-level behaviours.<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that the nature of behaviour must change. Competition remains basic. Yet, there must be a change. Either

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Waltz, “International Structure, National Force, and the Balance of World Power”, pp. 304-14.

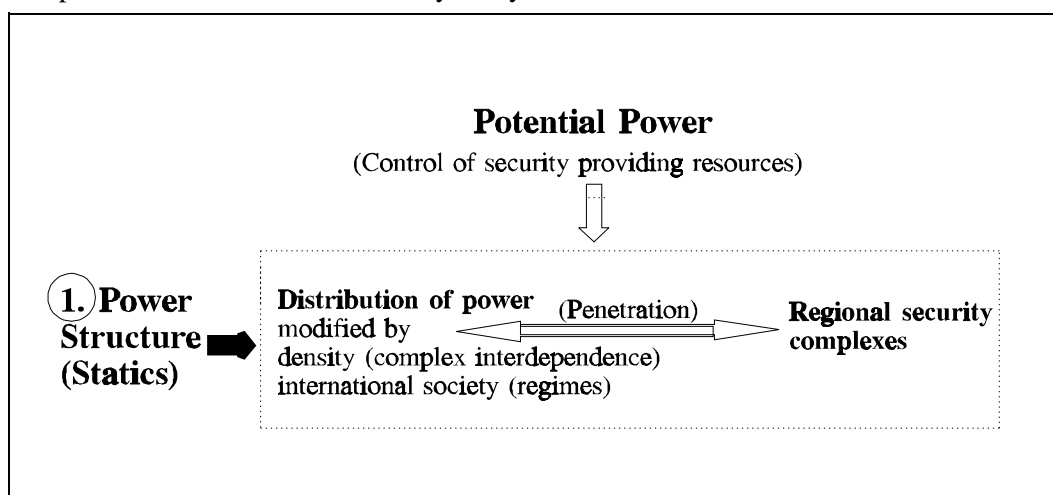
<sup>2</sup> Although it must also necessarily underlie Neorealist analysis, Buzan makes the derivation from actor’s interaction more explicit by overtly conceiving security complexes as process formation.

the number of big actors, and thus their behaviour, varies, or the distribution of forces between the existing actors shifts to let the equilibrium appear so unbalanced for at least one of these “powers” that it will start a conflict. Without this link from the systemic to the unit-level, Neorealism would be not only blind to its assumptions, but pretty dull, too: it would reduce itself to a mechanic power balancing riddled with well-known tautologies.

Thus, an analysis of the Security Complex is a *conditio sine qua non* for the study of the origins of a conflict. It includes a study of the main actors’ security perceptions and resulting motivations. Buzan’s definition of military security as concerning the capabilities of states, “and states’ perceptions of each other’s intentions”, needs, in the very spirit of Neorealism, to be extended to all security sectors.

As we have seen in Part III, Realism’s underlying theory of power sees the reason why questions of security have a primordial function in the shaping of actors’ behaviour in the anarchical international environment. Here the search for security exacerbate similar attempts by other “powers”. The result is a continuous arms race<sup>3</sup> and an overall increase in insecurity. In short, this is the “security dilemma”.

To sum up: Neorealist analysis of the origins of a conflict will try to link up a systemic with a unit-analysis. The *systemic analysis* will show that the conflict results from a changed security complex, which means (1) a shifting distribution of force, and/or (2) a modified density or functioning of the international society, or (3) a shifting link (penetration) between central and regional balances. For the Gulf crisis, the first and the last points are those most commonly analysed.



**Figure 8.1** The Power Structure

The *unit-analysis* will retrace the security perception and power calculus of the main actors that sparked off the conflict. Strictly speaking, the unit-level is subsumed under the

<sup>3</sup> Or more precisely: a continuous race for those resources in the different security sectors that provide independence and security, as arms for the military sector.

systemic, i.e. that security perceptions and power calculus are judged rational or irrational with regard to the “objective” power shifts. In its supplementary critique of the rational actor model, Allison’s work on crisis management still orders the research programme: when the rational actor model does not work, we have a variety of hypotheses to supplement it. The explanation is still organised along Realist rationality and its (possible) exceptions.

### 1. A regional hegemonic war in a “unipolar moment”<sup>4</sup>

Nearly everyone said it: this was the first major international conflict after the end of the Cold War. Or: it was the first of a “new world order”. These two themes have been replayed *ad nauseam* in the descriptions of the Gulf Conflict. In the following, an assessment will be made in order to show to what extent the changed central balance has influenced the regional security complex and the perceptions and intentions of the major “powers”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, by looking at the first and traditionally most important sector, military security, the Neorealist power analysis of the Gulf Conflict is characterised by a quest for regional hegemony in a “unipolar moment.”<sup>6</sup>

Two changes are analysed: the shift in the regional distribution of power after the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the effects of the shift in the central balance of power after the end of the Cold War. If there is a link between the shift in these two balances and military security, then the Realist power story must analyse whether *these changes have opened or closed military options for some actors to such an extent that security issues were at stake, that triggered the conflict.*<sup>7</sup>

This case can be made. Yet, they are two possible effects of the “unipolar moment” on regional security, namely (1) the closure of diplomatic options because only one superpower address was left to get help from and (2) the opening of options via a higher regional political autonomy. Both argumentations seem valid and derive from the same Realist account. In fact, they analyse two different forms of power shifts in the relation between the central and the regional balances. In the first case, i.e. the reduction of options, the “unipolar moment” does not reduce the overall power of the superpower overlay. Presupposing a constant sum argument, the US takes over the USSR power part. The effect on regional actors is a limitation of action. In the second case, the diminution

<sup>4</sup> See for coined title: Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1 (America and the World 1990/91), pp. 23-33.

<sup>5</sup> It is, by the way, an extremely interesting feature, that this conflict was considered a major historical event *during its unfolding*. There was a nearly unprecedented awareness of a “unique” event. This is actually an interesting incident for power analysis — but not in this chapter. See Part V, chapter 16.

<sup>6</sup> Hegemony is understood in this section in the Realist sense, that is, as the predominance of one actor. This predominance is based primarily on military power which is used to exhort political, economic and financial advantages.

<sup>7</sup> Simple shift in options is not enough. Such a change is incremental in international relations and we would not be able to distinguish between general competition and overt conflict.

of USSR interest as well as of superpower struggle means a general diminution of “central” power over the region, and thus an expansion of options for (some) regional actors. This interpretation must logically presuppose that the main interest of the US in the region was linked to its competition with the other superpower, whereas the first must see a more permanent US interest. At this point, the analysis of a “power logic” must stop; only a subjective security assessment can decide which of the stories did eventually prevail.

The following account shows how shifts in the central balance combined with the regional security structure can be linked to changes in the major actor’s policy option, security perceptions, and thus eventually to the triggering of the Gulf conflict. It is seen a conflict for regional hegemony between Iraq and the US.

### 1.1. The “freeze-theory”

Read backwards from the European experiences after 1989, the Cold War has come to be perceived as a stabilising factor of territorial status quo.<sup>8</sup> It disciplined regional conflicts. The Middle East might not have been as comprehensively “overlaid” by the superpower conflict as Europe.<sup>9</sup> The superpowers have not really put a lid on all regional conflicts; the Middle East was not strictly divided (with the exception of the Arab-Israeli conflict), no spheres of influence existed in the same way as in Europe. Nevertheless, repressed regional conflicts were breaking out; traditional conflicts were said to reappear. The outbreak of regional conflicts becomes an incidence of the so-called “freeze-theory.”<sup>10</sup>

To construct such a story presupposes an unstable regional balance that could be fixed only by the overlay of the superpower competition. And indeed, several “underlying” conflicts can be discerned in the Gulf. The conflict for regional hegemony will be touched on in the next sections. At this point we will concentrate on the immediate territorial issue which is a relict of decolonisation. In this respect, the Gulf Conflict is a relatively traditional *territorial war* between Iraq and Kuwait. Since this dispute seems a replay of older ones, a short digression into its chronology might be illuminating. It will be used by Realists to support their argument of a “Back to the Future” after the Cold War is over.

Realist approaches usually include issues of decolonisation around questions of statehood (and integration into international society), and around borders and territory. The Iraq-Kuwait territorial dispute touches three security areas: prime resources, geopolitics and economics. Expressed in power terms, the dispute has been about the control of three highly valued and contested resources: oil, space and capital. In the specific context of the

<sup>8</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Les enjeux d’une crise”, *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, Elzbieta Tromer and Ole Wæver, *The European Security Order Recast*, pp. 15-16, 41-44. In Buzan’s approach, yet not necessarily for all power analyses, this opens up the question of characterising the regional security complex as both (1) overlaid in its identity, because the very centre of the regional security problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict, has been partly imported from the international system, and (2) just penetrated, because the Middle East has always kept a regional dynamic.

<sup>10</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts* (Universität Hamburg: Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, Heft 56, August 1991), p. 38.

Second Gulf War, two territorial issues were at stake, namely the Rumaila oil fields and the two islands of Bubiyan and Warba immediately outside the Iraq coastline.

Power politics enters this territorial dispute with the very drawing of the borderline. Balance of power arguments have been invoked to defend the delineation of borders. The British drawing of the coastline border created a quasi-continental state without maritime outlet and was explicitly designed as an attempt to avoid a regional hegemonic power.<sup>11</sup> The borderline was first fixed in the Anglo-Ottoman treaty of 1913.<sup>12</sup> In this treaty Kuwait became a British protectorate under Ottoman sovereignty, a statute comparable to Egypt between 1882 and 1914 and Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1878 and 1908. In 1914, Britain declared Kuwait an independent state under British protectorate. The Ottoman-Kuwaiti border of 1913, which became the border between a British protectorate (Kuwait) and a British mandate territory (Iraq after the end of the Ottoman Empire) was arbitrated again in 1922. At that time, oil had already become an issue. Again Sir Percy Cox fixed the line between the emerging Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.<sup>13</sup> Iraq got only a 60 km coastline and no deep harbour. Since the independence of Iraq in 1932, King Ghazi affirmed the “historic” (Ottoman) rights of Iraq over Kuwait whose *sheikh* he described as “feudal” and “retrograde.”<sup>14</sup> In 1938, the Kuwaiti legislative government unanimously approved a request for Kuwaiti reintegration into Iraq. In the following year, the British suppressed an armed uprising which had this as an object.<sup>15</sup> Iraq’s only maritime outlet, the port Umm Qasr build first in 1939, then destroyed and rebuild again, is controlled by the two islands Bubiyan and Warba, that belong to Kuwait. Three more recent crises are linked to this territorial dispute.

At Kuwait’s independence in 1961, Abd-al Karim Qasim expressed the Iraqi government’s intention to annexe Kuwait and in fact concentrated troops at the border. A week later, on 1 July, the UK sent troops to protect the emirate. Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt supported Kuwaiti independence, although they organised the retreat of British troops. On 20 July, Kuwait was accepted into the Arab League and British troops replaced by Egyptians, Saudis, Jordans, and Sudanese. Despite repeated statements to the contrary in the (secondary) literature, Iraq formally recognized the Kuwaiti state on 4 October 1963. It

<sup>11</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> For the history of the border issue, see Henri Laurens, “Le contentieux territorial entre l’Irak et le Kuwait,” *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), pp. 14-24.

<sup>13</sup> In 1913, in the anglo-ottoman negotiations, Sir Percy Cox was British agent. In 1923, he was High Commissioner of Iraq. During the same occasion, Cox’s division, attempting to please Saudi claims, made Kuwait lose two thirds of its territory. See also Hala Fattah, “From Regionalism to Nation-State: A Short History of Kuwait,” in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds), *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), pp. 45-46.

<sup>14</sup> Henri Laurens, “Le contentieux territorial...”, pp. 19, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Gowan, “The Gulf War, Iraq and Western Liberalism”, *New Left Review*, no. 187 (May-June 1991), p.37.

was the new Ba'ath regime which, after its successful coup accepted Kuwaiti sovereignty for \$US 85 million. It did not, however, recognise the border line.<sup>16</sup>

In March 1973, Iraq invaded the North of Kuwait. Negotiations engaged under the auspices of the Arab League and Iraq retreated in April. The territorial question remained unresolved, since the Kuwaitis refused any concession, and the Iraqis remained ambiguous about the final recognition of Kuwaiti borders. As usual, a contract exchanging Iraqi water against Kuwaiti credits was signed. In 1975, the border zone was again occupied by Iraqi troops. A plan to accept the border line, if the two islands were contractually given for 99 years to Iraq was not realised.<sup>17</sup> The same request for a 99 years lease was repeated in 1980, shortly after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, and in 1989 after the end of the war. The Kuwaiti answer was always: no.<sup>18</sup>

All this indicates that many “games” that came up with the Second Gulf war have been played before, as, for instance, territorial occupations, Arab military and diplomatic buffering, and foreign intervention. In this reading, Kuwait is a particularly weak piece in the Gulf-chain that needs permanent foreign protection, first British, then Arab - and finally US. The latter started with the “Tanker war” in 1987, when Kuwait allied with the US for the first time.

### 1.2. The loss of diplomatic freedom?

Two different theses exist with regard to the impact of central unipolarity on the power calculus of regional actors. Both are perfectly compatible with Realist power reasoning. For the first, the regional weakening of the USSR has triggered a change of policy by regional actors to seek collaboration with the US, and thus should result in less confrontation. Traditionally, regional actors used the central balance to play off one superpower against the other (Israel being a notable exception).<sup>19</sup> A classical example is Egypt which switched from a position of Non-Alignment to the USSR in 1956, in part because the US refused to help finance the Assuwan dam. It moved back to equidistance after 1967 and then switched to the US from 1972 onwards, when Soviet technicians were invited to leave. Another example is USSR-aligned Iraq which, at the outset of the First Gulf War 1980-82, looked to the US for arms, because the USSR refused to supply these, and eventually renewed diplomatic relations with US in 1984, after 16 years. Weaker Gulf states tried to keep equidistance. Kuwait established diplomatic relations with USSR at the end of 1980s. When, at the end of the First Gulf War, Kuwaiti oil tankers were attacked,

<sup>16</sup> Bassam Tibi, “Die irakische Kuwait-Invasion und die Golfkrise”, *Beiträge zur Konfliktforschung*, no. 4 (1990), pp. 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> It is not even clear when exactly the Iraqis retreated. It might be linked to the domestic changes (1975 is the year when Saddam Hussein seems to win the battle within the party).

<sup>18</sup> Bishara A. Bahbah, “The Crisis in the Gulf—Why Iraq Invaded Kuwait,” in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds), *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Indyk, “Watershed in the Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 1 (America and the World 1991/92), p. 70.

a number were re-flagged and protected by US naval military forces. It seems that Kuwait deliberately made advances to the Soviet Union in this matter to force the hand of a rather reluctant Reagan administration. The effectiveness of such a policy was heavily reduced with the realignment of the USSR on US positions in the Third World, a position that might be seen as a relatively inexpensive sign for its “New Thinking”. In other words, the decline of Soviet influence in the region reduces the local options. Whereas Syria realigned, “Iraq’s obdurate refusal to recognise what was happening... played a major role in precipitating the Gulf crisis...”<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, the US, as the only remaining superpower, needed each of the regional actor less and therefore gained diplomatic leverage.<sup>21</sup>

For the other interpretation, one need not retreat to arguments of a short-sighted, irrational or otherwise unrealistic Iraqi behaviour. It is, on the contrary, possible to argue “realistically” that for one regional actor, the just mentioned reduction of options might not apply. If there is a regional hegemon that only waits for the Cold War lid to be lifted, then the End of the Cold War would not have impeded, but rather facilitated aggressive action. The hegemonic nation could reasonably expect that the end of the superpower overlay made regional actors independent of superpower-patronage, if they so desired. Territorial readjustments seemed to be back on the agenda without being automatically dragged into the superpower conflict.<sup>22</sup> This presupposes a highly unstable regional balance that could be fixed only by the overlay of the superpower competition.

### 1.3. Hegemony on the globe, in the Near East, in the Gulf

Following a geopolitical account, regional hegemony in the Gulf meant first and foremost British hegemony for a century and ending in 1971. It “secured” the region on the three strategic levels: (1) domestically, it avoided disruptive change; (2) regionally, it prevented war, and (3) globally, it deterred other superpower overlay. This period is at times considered the height of benign hegemony in the Gulf, never to be reached again.<sup>23</sup>

The UK withdrawal produced a power vacuum, to be filled increasingly by a *Pax Iranica*. The military ascendancy of Iran was consecrated by the Algiers Agreement of 6 March 1975, where the “Thalweg line” was accepted as border in the Schatt el-Arab. During the 1975-79 period Iran turned into a status quo power. This changed through the revolution in Iran. Then, Iran attempted to overthrow the Ba’ath regime, because it was

<sup>20</sup> George Joffe, “Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (April 1993), pp. 180, 181 (quote).

<sup>21</sup> Martin Indyk, “Watershed in the Middle East”, p. 85.

<sup>22</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> For this paragraph, see Shahram Chubin, “Post-war Gulf security”, *Survival*, vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (March-April 1991), p. 142.



the first and foremost hindrance to an Islamic order in the region. Thus, according to this account, war was inevitable for the defence of Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

After Iran's defeat, Iraq did not face any regional actor comparable to its might. Thus, whereas the above-mentioned argument, namely the reduction of the Cold War bipolar overlay on the regional balance, applies theoretically to both actors, Iraq's objectives put it in a situation where it might try out the possible new options opened for regional hegemony.

Yet, regional security cannot be reduced to the sole Iran-Iraq balance, even though it is the centerpiece of the Gulf security complex. The Gulf is characterised by a triangle: Iran, Iraq and the Arab Peninsula states, which, around Saudi Arabia (without Yemen), established the Gulf Council for Cooperation in 1981. Given the three poles, the most stable balance of power system seemed to be one in which there is a rough balance between the three poles with at least two *status quo* powers.<sup>25</sup> The Iran-Iraq war had both a balancing and neutralising effect on both states. Its end has left the two powers dissatisfied. They were both interested in changing the regional balance. They had developed a common interest in high oil prices in order to pay for the reconstruction: after 1988, the countries of the Arab peninsula felt more and more threatened by the two hegemonic contenders.<sup>26</sup> More threatened by Iranian Shi'ia fundamentalism than by the Ba'ath ideology (or what remained of it) in Iraq, Saudi Arabia opted for the latter and tried to co-opt and moderate Iraq. In 1989, the Council for Arab Cooperation was founded.<sup>27</sup> Iraq specialised in the particular role of the Arab defender against Iranian power and Shi'ite fundamentalism — in exchange for Gulf money and support. This role could no longer be upheld after the war, because the Gulf states were less dependent on Iraq for anti-Iranian protection. Thus, the end of the First war unbalanced the regional system.

Besides the Gulf triangle, Iraq is also balancing its possible hegemony in the Gulf against the Israeli hegemony in the Near East. Again, the evolution of Arab-Israeli relations after 1988 can be said to have opened options for a regional hegemon and thus eventually paved the way for the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait. The Palestinian cause has usually been used by those countries that aspired to regional leadership.<sup>28</sup> Yet Iraq could not do

<sup>24</sup> This is the account of Efraim Karsh, "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 256-268. The strong reliance on the foreign policy shift which the Iranian revolution induced, is obviously no "determinist" geopolitical argument. Iran had a comparably geopolitical strength in 1979 and in 1980, having possibly increased in "ideological power," but not necessarily in "military power." For Karsh, the geopolitical argument derives from strategic thinking, i.e. that Iraq was responding to an external threat caused by a change in Iranian *intentions*. Since he admits that the general rule "vicinity breeds conflict" is only partly true, no geopolitical "determinism" can follow.

<sup>25</sup> Shahram Chubin, "Post-war Gulf security", p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Les enjeux d'une crise", p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Yet, already the meeting end of May 1990 showed the internal thrift, when the Iraqi government was not able to push through Arab sanctions against the US for its pro-Israel policy.

<sup>28</sup> For the following argument, see William B. Quandt, "The Middle East in 1990", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1 (America and the World 1990/91), pp. 53ff.

so as long as peace talks were channelled via Arafat's PLO, Egypt and the US. Until early 1990, the US was pressing Israel hard to accept the Baker Plan, which remained well short of what Israel signed at Camp David. US-Israeli relations were brought to a historic low when Israel finally refused the Plan in March 1990. Direct US-PLO contacts were, however, going on. After an incident in Israel during which seven Palestinians were killed, the US planned to vote for a UN Security Council resolution which would have allowed the UN Secretary General to carry out an investigation. Apparently on Iraqi instigation, this very day the Abul Abbas branch of the PLO carried out an abortive strike on the Israeli coast. The US, hard pressed domestically, vetoed the resolution. Arafat was furious and isolated. On 20 June, Bush suspended the US-PLO dialogue. The Palestinian card passed to Iraq. The collapse of Arab-Israeli peace talks unbalanced the Middle East regional system by isolating Egypt within the Arab world and Arafat's El-Fatah within the PLO. It made the Gulf subsystem even more independent from the Near East.

In a sense, this division of the two subsystems accentuates a regional bipolarised system with Israel pitched against Iraq. After the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq sought to establish a double regional balance of deterrence. The aim was to link the Israeli (atomic) predominance in the Near East and Iraqi (chemical) predominance in the Gulf. Thereby the Second Gulf war becomes the last in a chain of Iraq-Israeli contests: the air attack in 1981 against Iraqi nuclear facilities, then the Iraqi-Israeli crisis in March-April 1990 and finally the Second Gulf War.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, the "unipolar moment" permitted the US a role as a new balancer both in the Gulf and in the Near East. In the Tanker war, the US took sides against Iran. Its unintended attack on an Iranian civil Airbus was interpreted as intended by Iranian officials and helped to stop the conflict, because the latter thought worse would follow.<sup>30</sup> Then, the US was becoming the protector of the Peninsula states<sup>31</sup> against Iraq and Iran.

If Iraq was (is) challenging the Israeli leadership of the Near East, the "geopolitical logic" points to a regional hegemonic contest between Iraq and the US. This was acknowledged by analysts of the time. For example, Zalmay Khalilzad, a member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, wrote a memo arguing that with Iran weakened and unable to balance Iraq, Iraq would now be the one seeking regional dominance and would see the United States as a threat. "The logic of power [sic!] is that a regional hegemon would want any external power out of the region."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Picard, "Le régime irakien et la crise. Les ressorts d'une politique", *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (Oct.-Dec. 1990), p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "Der Auftakt zur Golf-Krise", *Europa Archiv*, no. 17 (1990), p. 513, fn. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Not all. There is an antagonism on the peninsula. Yemen as the most populated country represents a threat to Saudi Arabia after the former's unification. Not unexpectedly, the Saudi government has tried ever since to break up the state again.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson, "'The Enemy of my Enemy ... may still be my Enemy, too': U.S.-Iraqi relations, 1982-1990, and the Failure of Accommodation", Paper presented to the 32nd Annual Conference of the International Studies Association, April 1-5, 1992, Atlanta, USA (March 1992), p. 36.

#### **1.4. The challenger: a regional middle power**

Yet the “logic of power” can give only one type of explanation of why Saddam Hussein should use a regional war to get the US out of the region: Hussein is more powerful in a regional conflict or is induced to think so. To understand the trigger of the conflict, Neorealist analysis must link the balance of power structure to the actor’s security perception. This is a relational concept, as is deterrence. It concerns the dialectic interplay of wills.

This link is the first tricky enterprise in Neorealist power analysis. It is built around the idea of a “balance of threats”. Realist writers have since long been aware that similar power balances do not always produce similar outcomes. The rationalisations of this observation make up the whole realist-idealist agenda in policy-debates, as for instance (1) irredentist vs. status quo power behaviour and (2) disproportionate insecurity perceptions, both affected by, but not reducible to the distribution of power. Both lines of thought point in the direction of the study of rules. Whereas the first can still reason in terms of different “powers” and the system of international accords and alliances, the second focuses on the individual decision-making including psychological parameters. Security perception and the will to exercise power cannot be taken for granted. In order to keep Neorealist coherence, power analysis constructs a “normal” case with a reasonable national interest formulation and implementation, all derived from the distribution of power, and discriminates exceptional actions accordingly.

In the analysis of the two impacts the diminished overlay can have on regional security, closure and opening of options, Hussein escalated the conflict as if he anticipated that a wider range of options might become available to him. This story presupposed a diminished US interest in the region once the superpower conflict was over, or at least some regional restraint on the side of the US by the remaining Soviet power.

The first hypothesis, of a perceived diminished US interest in the region, contradicts explicit Iraqi statements. The available information does not suggest that the Iraqi government believed in a declining US interest, or that they miscalculated the effect of the end of the Cold War for regional security. It does not appear that Hussein’s “obdurate refusal to recognize” (see above) the changed international environment can be the cause for triggering the conflict.

Quite to the contrary, Hussein repeatedly warned against US expansionism. Before the invasion, at the February 1990 meeting of the Arab Cooperation Council in Amman, Hussein analysed the world as left with one superpower that “will continue to depart from the restrictions that govern the rest of the world... the country that will have the greatest influence in the region through the Arabian Gulf and its oil, will maintain its superiority as a superpower without an equal to compete with it. This means that if the Gulf people, along with all Arabs, are not careful, the Arabian Gulf will be governed by the US

will.”<sup>33</sup> In a speech for the 22nd anniversary of the revolution, on 27 July 1990, Saddam Hussein presented the whole mounting crisis as the outgrowth of a US attempt to dominate the Gulf and in particular the price of oil. In order to control its allies<sup>34</sup> and the USSR when the latter will become net importer, bigger strategic oil reserves are needed. These would permit the US to go to war and speculate on stocks whenever it suits its interests. Thus, he argued, low prices are needed. He acknowledged that there was a collusion of interests between Arab countries and US speculators that managed downwards oil prices whenever needed. As a result, Hussein depicted the Gulf as a region where the US can influence the oil prices at its will, thereby threatening the stability of any country in the Middle East. This will be indirectly paid for by the Arabs themselves via lower prices, thus lower incomes, followed by money depreciation.<sup>35</sup>

This view of an unchecked US bid for regional dominance, and the necessity to check it, applies also for Iraq’s reasoning during the crisis. The following statements are reported from a meeting with Budimir Loncar, Yugoslavia’s federal secretary for foreign affairs on 28 December 1990.

The United States was the only superpower left, Saddam continued. It was an open question whether the Americans would behave responsibly, or whether they would seek to hold the entire world in their hands. “It is not in the interest of the world”, Saddam said. “It is not in the interest even of the United States [for the Americans] to become masters of the Middle East oil fields. In this way, [the United States] could become a power without a compass. Such a power could bring the world to the brink ... [so that] when Iraq defends its homeland, it is defending the liberty of all.” Loncar replied, “Three years ago, this crisis would have acquired such global dimensions that it would have become a contest between the blocs in the end. Now, all this has changed. One can no longer count on the existence of two antagonistic blocs.” Saddam nodded his agreement. Then he interrupted, “But exactly because the balance is disrupted, because the USSR is out of the game, this is an opportunity to start establishing a new counterbalance to the United States.”<sup>36</sup>

The often repeated argument was that the Iraqi government overestimated the Soviet influence in the central and regional balance. Several Iraqi attempts to mobilise the USSR against the US can serve as indicators, as, for instance, the trip by Tareq Aziz to Moscow

<sup>33</sup> U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory. The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War* (Toronto, New York: Random House, Times Books, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> This theme has already been played during a former Middle East crisis. In 1973, the French Foreign Minister at the time, Michel Jobert, insinuated and reacted as if the US wanted to control the oil market, and its energy agencies, in order to control its allies. As usual, US Realists most critical towards their domestic idealists, are ill-prepared if foreigners turn Realism against themselves. Kissinger castigates Jobert’s obsessions and their personal competition, but he understands it only too well. See Henry A. Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. ?

<sup>35</sup> “Discours de Saddam Hussein pour le 22e anniversaire de la révolution” du 27 juillet 1990 à Bagdad, *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 195.

just before the US-Soviet summit in September in Helsinki and the open letter by Saddam Hussein to Gorbachov on the eve of the summit. In this letter, he reminded the Soviet government that without any reaction it might lose its status as a superpower.<sup>37</sup> Yet this evidence is not conclusive. Once the conflict broke out, it could be expected that the Iraq would try to weaken the coalition build against it, by playing the superpowers against one another. The USSR, with which it had a treaty of friendship and cooperation since the 1970s, would be an obvious target. Since February 1990, Saddam Hussein had declared that the USSR was no longer the “main defender of the Arab cause.”<sup>38</sup> Iraqi miscalculation of the Soviet side in the conflict seems implausible.<sup>39</sup>

The question remains: faced with such a security threat, why did Hussein start a conflict where he must have anticipated an increasing reduction of national power and security? How can his decision to invade be rationally understood? As mentioned above, the underlying motive might either be an irredentist and profoundly expansionist behaviour that no regime can ever alter by any means short of war (the Nazi German analogy), or a perceived threat of insecurity so high as to make a preemptive war the lesser evil (the Wilhelminian German analogy). The difference between the two is of great importance for the assessment of the correct US foreign policy response. In the first case, where Iraq would be seen as an opportunity driven aggressor (explicitly linked to the Hitler analogy), deterrence would be the appropriate means. In the second, where Iraq appears as a vulnerable country in need, reassurance would be the best choice.<sup>40</sup>

The expansionist argument would take Iraqi’s bid for regional hegemony for granted and add reasons to understand why it triggered the war in that “Unipolar Moment”. In the specific case, Iraq could reasonably expect that the international management of the Soviet decline and of Central and Eastern European liberation would leave the two superpowers too occupied with themselves to react. The moment for intervention was not only given by a shifting central balance of power, but by Hussein’s perception that the US would not engage on multiple fronts, although they had vital interests in the region. This argument derives from the *interdependence* of different security issues and the possibility to link different strategic theatres, a possibility given by the interpenetration of the regional and the central security complexes. The necessity of intervention might have been severed by the impression that if Iraq did not gain power when the US was still accommodating the Soviet decline, it would not be able to do it in the foreseeable future and thus become

<sup>37</sup> Bassam Tibi, “Der Irak und die Golfkrise”, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 7-8/91 (8 February 1991), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Helmut Hubel, “Die Mächte im Nahen Osten und der zweite Golfkrieg”, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 30-31/91 (19 July 1991), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> An acute attempt to rationalise crisis and war behaviour of the major actors notes this contradiction between the statements about sure US response and the expressed Iraqi disappointment of the Soviet response. See Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-1991: A Failed or Impossible Task”, *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992), p. 173.

<sup>40</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf 1990-1991”, pp. 156-57, where she links the Hitler story with the opportunity-driven aggressor.

completely dependent on the regional hegemon, the US. Similarly, the regional configuration with different *rapprochements* (Iran-Kuwait, Egypt-Iraq, Saudi Arabia-US) were loosening the Iraqi dominance which persisted after the First Gulf war.<sup>41</sup>

Here, we would have a classic security argument; the Soviet decline makes the US presence a threat to Iraq's security, the conflict being a preemptive attack to gain power in order to face the US politically. Thus, we have constructed a military security story that links the power shift to central unipolarity via the security perception of regional actors to the invasion of Kuwait. It is the Iraqi side of the bid for regional hegemony.

The second argument, namely the heightened insecurity approach, must construct a story where different outside dynamics would spur a perception of threat big enough to make the war necessary for survival. War appears here not as premeditated, but as a "choice of last resort, taken only after trying other means for shoring up his position in the face of great adversity ... In short, Kuwait has been the latest casualty of the Iraqi's leader struggle for survival in general, and of the Iran-Iraq war in particular."<sup>42</sup> This account cites a series of events that fostered the Iraqi government's threat perception and thus insecurity. Karsh and Rautsi talk of many plots against Hussein. The Western effort to dismantle the supergun (see below, chapter 10, 3.3) was interpreted as a campaign aimed at paving the way for military aggression against Iraq, "a suspicion which was aggravated by [Hussein's] conviction that Israel would never allow any Arab state to blunt its technological edge. More immediately, however, Hussein feared that the massive influx of Soviet Jews to Israel would boost the self-confidence of the Jewish State and would lure it into military adventures beyond its frontiers."<sup>43</sup>

Thus, an Israeli threat is considered as part of the triggering dynamic.<sup>44</sup> In March 1990, "the Iraqi public was in a panic that an Israeli attack might be imminent."<sup>45</sup> Thus, by early April, Hussein might have concluded that he must escalate threats against Israel to deter it. His speech of 2 April, where, in the midst of conciliatory remarks, he

<sup>41</sup> Gunther Hellmann, "Der Krieg um Kuwait: Katalysator einer „neuen Weltordnung“ oder Vorbote neuer Konflikte", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 7-8/91 (8 February 1991), pp. 13-14.

<sup>42</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", *Survival*, vol. XXXIII, no. 1 (January-February 1991), pp. 18-19.

<sup>43</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", p. 23. The fact that the authors must quote Iraqi sources (newspapers) to support the argument, makes it difficult to judge if it was just a press campaign using the powerful Israeli argument as a way to justify Iraqi expansionism or if the Iraqi government indeed perceived an Israeli threat.

<sup>44</sup> This would be also corroborated by the Iraqi ballistic missile programme which announced to have tested an anti-tactical missile, the Faw-1 in 1988. Although the claim was (rightly) received as dubious for the great complexity of the technology, "it clearly indicates the direction of Iraqi security thinking. The system is ostensibly intended to counter possible *Israeli* missile attack." See Aaron Karp, "Ballistic missile proliferation in the Third World", in *SIPRI Yearbook 1989. World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 298-99 for the Iraqi production and pp. 299-300 for the Israeli regional primacy as exemplified by its first domestically launched satellite on 19 September 1988, lifted by one of its IRBM.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, "The Unnecessary War", in Victoria Brittain (ed.) *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), p. 11.

threatened Israel with an attack including chemical weapons, becomes in this reading not a sign for Iraq expansionism, but of Iraqi deterrence.<sup>46</sup>

This story comes eventually close to Kissinger's distinction between a legitimate and a revolutionary power. The latter's feeling of insecurity is nothing uncommon in international affairs. What makes a power "revolutionary" is not that it feels threatened, "*but that nothing can reassure it.*"<sup>47</sup> Such a power looks for absolute security for itself, which in the international system, means absolute insecurity for all other powers. Expansionism and war is the result of a country which perceives its security to be permanently threatened by the outside world. Conflicts arise out of the repeated attempts to free itself from this perceived threat. This can occur also, one might add to Kissinger's account, if it would seem rational, i.e. conform to the distribution of power, not to risk a war.

Consequently, for both explanations, the conflict is seen as a *war for regional hegemony*, here because of Iraqi expansionism, there for its insecurity. Both understandings stress the perceived necessity of the Iraqi government to preempt either US or Israeli power. "The question is who can impose its hegemony on the Gulf states..., yesterday Iran or Iraq, today Iraq or the US."<sup>48</sup>

### 1.5. The counterforce: the international hegemon

The conflict arose not only through Iraq's invasion, but also because the United States reacted in such a determinate way in order to realize its bid for hegemony in the Gulf and to make an old strategic dream come true: to have direct military access to and control of the Gulf. Once again we have two different stories for the effect of the shift in the central balance on US regional security and behaviour, both compatible with Neorealism.

For some commentators, the changed Soviet approach led to a changed international strategic thinking which is also partly responsible for the United States' "concept of unilateral intervention".<sup>49</sup> The Gulf Conflict is seen as the last US intervention in a longer chain. These interventions were traditionally not possible. Yet, due to the weakening of the USSR, the US became more interventionist in regional affairs. This applies particularly to the backyard of US foreign policy, Central and South America. After a relative decline of overt US intervention as a means of neighbouring policy, the Grenada invasion marked a turn — and was greeted as such. This renewed policy of direct intervention reached a high point with the bombardment of Panama and the removal of Noriega. But also in the Middle East, the US took a more interventionist stand, as against Syria in the Lebanon crisis in 1983, against Libya with the "surgical strike" air attack

<sup>46</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 2. Italics in the original.

<sup>48</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "Der Auftakt zur Golf-Krise", p. 508, 514, fn. 9 (quote).

<sup>49</sup> George Joffe, "Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath", p. 179.

targeted at Ghaddafi's headquarters in 1986, against Iran in the Tanker war at the end of the First Gulf War in 1988, and finally against Iraq in the Second Gulf War in 1991.<sup>50</sup>

The exact assessment of the range of options newly available to the US because of the USSR's disinterest in superpower showdowns, could be best "tested" in practice. In that sense, the assessment of the new range of options is in itself a new option. Thus, the Gulf Conflict can be seen as the US attempt to test the exact degree of Soviet weakening and of the recognition of US leadership.<sup>51</sup> This kind of interpretation is a replay of the typical power vacuum argument: without the pressure in the central balance, the US can do whatever the regional actors allow. The US power expansion comes to a halt when the marginal return from further expansion is equal and/or inferior to the costs. The reduced Soviet presence means the removal of a big obstacle to the US' attempt to fill the regional power vacuum. *The change of power in the central balance makes a regional conflict possible which, in turn, helps to assess the extent of the central power shift.*

As with the discussion of Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST), the thesis about US hegemony is challenged by those who see the basic shift in a long-term power decline of the US. The second way to approach the US bid for regional hegemony is to see it as an attempt to reverse the power decline by the means of a regional war. This is the only case where the shift to the post Cold War is understood as a shift in the importance of particular policy instruments. The end of the Cold War exacerbated the general tendency to replace military means for conflict resolution that had spurred the discussion on Complex Interdependence from the 1970s onwards. Yet increasingly, the US appears to lose economic, financial and ideological bases for sustaining its hegemony. "The Cold War is over — and Japan and Germany have won."<sup>52</sup> In this reading, the Second Gulf War can be seen as an attempt of a declining hegemon to use its remaining power in order to reinstall the military factor as the main power factor — and thus reproduce its hegemony.<sup>53</sup> Putting military means at the top of the power instruments enables the US to use this remaining leverage and apply "linkage" to other fields for forcing its partners to make concessions.<sup>54</sup> After all, it was the first US war financed by others, domestically through US debt and Japanese credits, internationally through Petro-Dollars and Western checkbook-diplomacy. "Burden-sharing" can, of course, be seen both as an indicator of decreasing power, because the US has to use foreign money, and as an indicator of strength, because only the US is able to enforce such a "sharing." The first interpretation

<sup>50</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Les enjeux d'une crise", p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, "Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War and the new world order", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1992), p. 270.

<sup>53</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 42. This argument takes sometimes psychological traits, when the US is represented as an actor who wants to heal the profile-neurosis of a power with decreasing confidence.

<sup>54</sup> Silviu Brucan, "El orden mundial tras el fracaso del comunismo y la guerra del golfo," in Silviu Brucan, Andre Gunder Frank, Johan Galtung, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *El orden mundial tras la crisis de la guerra del golfo* (Alicante: Instituto de cultura «Juan Gil-Albert», 1993), pp. 9ff.



of HST is compatible with the framework in this chapter; the second might indicate a different power analysis.

Thus, the implosion of Soviet power and its effects on the Gulf can be traced to security issues that push the two contenders for regional hegemony, Iraq and the US, to make a try. In the “new world order,” Iraq tries to establish a power space for itself whereas the US, aware of the risk of many “Iraqs”, resorts to a war, not of liberation, but of power destruction to reinforce its international hegemony. In the words of the former French Minister of Defence, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who resigned during the Gulf Conflict, the “new world order” got its founding experience: a UN-approved war of punishment for a Southern challenger.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. Beyond military security: political and financial destabilisation

Neorealists could, but only few would, be satisfied with the geopolitical account presented above. As already noted, recent security analysis usually includes ideas of interdependence and must be able to account for linkages between military capabilities and other issue or security areas.

During periods of détente, the military agenda did not seem to apply to International Relations. A lot of so-called “low-politics” issues, and in particular economic relations, became of utmost importance. This happened first, because the nuclear stalemate both exported East-West competition to third parties and lowered the level where direct East-West competition could take place, namely in the economic (and ideological) sphere. The question of “economic statecraft” became crucial, because here Western policies could try to induce policy changes in the East without trespassing the military threshold. Kissinger’s “linkage” is typical of this period.

As a reverse side of this détente approach, a “securisation” of normally non-security issues has taken place. Expanding on neo-mercantilist thinking, more and more national security formulations explicitly take questions of economic resources, credits and debts, and environmental threats into account.<sup>56</sup> The basic reason is probably to be found in the rising internal and external expectations on governmental action. The 20th century has seen the global development of mass-mobilised societies. Political systems were forced to create a more widely based system of representation. They often resorted to economic and social rewards as a buffers of rising social mobilisation. This makes regimes and their political order highly dependent on economic success. In a similar move, the Welfare State in economically developed countries has fostered the legitimacy of democracy, but concomitantly, made regimes highly sensitive to long economic crises or recessions. The Gulf conflict is no exception to this rule. Many analyses of the conflict, which are

<sup>55</sup> “Ce qui manque à notre république, c’est le citoyen”, entretien avec Jean-Pierre Chevènement, *Le Nouveau Politis*, no. 177 (Avril 1992), pp. 23.

<sup>56</sup> For this point, see in more detail, Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, Working Paper 5/1993 (Copenhagen: Centre for Conflict and Peace Research, 1993).

compatible with Neorealist power analysis, see the internal insecurity of Hussein's regime after the Iran-Iraq war as the main reason for his hasty attack.

### **2.1. After 1973: increasing autonomy of the regional security complex**

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Middle East provoked a reconsideration of strategic agendas. Oil was no new primary resource for which battles, diplomatic or not, have been fought. After all, colonisation might not have been done (solely) *for* the control of primary resources, but colonial powers were aware of them and did not disregard either possible profits or strategic independence. When Sir Percy Cox decided in 1922 on the borders in the Northeast of the Arab Peninsula, he constructed two so-called "neutral zones" between Kuwait and Iraq, because the British (rightly) suspected there to be oil-fields, the income from which should be shared between the two countries (and the British oil-companies).

Nationalisation of MNC investment was also already old hat with decolonisation. The new point in 1973 was that organised opposition to Western handling of primary product markets arose which could, at least temporarily, affect Western states and households directly.<sup>57</sup> Low politics could hurt. It could upset the domestic basis of Welfare legitimacy and the international system of "embedded liberalism".

The regional order, or its balance of power was deeply reshuffled as a result of the oil boom and the increase in revenue after 1973. East-West penetration, as exemplified by superpower clientelistic relations and the rift between conservative and progressive governments, became less important. The region's own power, in the sense of the control of generally valued resources like oil and money, increased, as did the region's self-dynamic. Besides the above-mentioned military security balance, the region was build around the exchange of capital for labour: Petro-Dollars transferred from rich to poor countries and labour immigration into rich countries with capital transfers back. By 1980 the rich states were giving their poorer Arab neighbours \$US 7.9 billion a year in economic assistance (for an assessment of Arab aid, see Table 8.1). The cumulative financial flows between 1979 and 1989 totalled \$US 55 billion for aid and \$US 87 billion for net workers' remittances, that is \$US 142 billion. This represented "on average nearly a fifth of recipient country imports, over 20% of total investment and about 5.5% of GNP."<sup>58</sup> This balance was the basis for the more autonomous regional economic security structure.

The slump in the oil price during the 1980s profoundly weakened this "balance of interests." Arab oil revenues dropped from \$US 178 billion in 1980 to \$US 41 billion in 1986. The redistribution via aid and remittances had always covered only a minimal part of the oil income of richer countries. But before the oil price crisis, the major donor

<sup>57</sup> One did not care that much during these years about the poor oil-importing countries. This arrived only with the debt crisis at the end of the 1970s.

<sup>58</sup> For the following figures, see: "Economic crisis in the Arab World," *ODI Briefing Paper* (London: Overseas Development Institute, March 1991), pp. 2-3.

**Table 8.1 Aid by Arab Countries 1980 and 1986-1990**

	1980	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
	<i>US\$ millions</i>					
Arab Countries	9 539	4 498	3 290	2 262	1 487	6 312
of which:						
Saudi Arabia	5 682	3 517	2 888	2 048	1 171	3 692
Kuwait	1 140	715	316	108	169	1 666
	<i>Aid as percentage of GNP</i>					
Arab Countries	3.26	1.81	1.24	0.85	0.54	--
of which:						
Saudi Arabia	4.87	4.67	3.88	2.64	1.49	3.89
Kuwait	3.52	2.89	1.20	0.40	0.54	--

Source: OECD *Development Cooperation*, 1991 Report

countries decided to cut aid for the period 1980-1988 by 63% (Saudi Arabia) and 91% (Kuwait). In 1989, the total value of inter-Arab aid transfers had dwindled from \$US 8.7 billion in 1980 to less than \$US 1.5 billion.

In a confidential report of 1990, the *Union des banques arabes et françaises* (UBAF) in Paris, estimated that although the total Arab debt was about \$US 208 billion, Arab credits abroad reached \$US 670 billion. In other words, less than 10 million Arabs living in the six countries of the GCC can dispose of a surplus of \$US 462 billion, whereas 190 million Arabs are indebted at 52% of their GNP or 181% of their export income. By 1990, only 7% of GCC investment went to the Arab world.<sup>59</sup>

In the meanwhile, especially Kuwait has become independent of oil incomes. With a GNP of around \$US 20 billion, Kuwait accumulated a foreign wealth of around \$US 120 billion. Through the omnipresent *Kuwait Investment Office* it invested around \$US 25 to 30 billion in the US in forms of assets, real estate and in particular US Treasury Bonds. Other investments have gone to Spain, Japan and Germany. In the latter, Kuwait holds 20% of Hoechst and of Daimler Benz. The income from these investments is higher than the oil income. There is thus a common interest of both Kuwait and the Western world in international economic stability.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> For details of this report, see Doneya Awany, "La dette arabe: 208 milliards de dollars", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 37, no. 438 (Septembre 1990), p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Frédéric Clairemonte, "La finance koweïtienne peut se passer des revenus de pétrole", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 37, no. 438 (Septembre 1990), p. 18.

After 1988, and after the financial crowding out produced by the first Gulf war, the balance no longer held. The Gulf has been characterised as a unique balance between rich, poorly populated and badly defended countries and densely populated, well armed, but relatively poor ones.<sup>61</sup> It was this explosive mixture which triggered the conflict.

## 2.2. Iraq's *fuite en avant*

At least 100.000 Iraqis died during the First Gulf war. Iraq was financially exhausted. The costs of Iraqi reconstruction after the war were estimated at \$US 230 billion,<sup>62</sup> the entire war cost at \$US 452.6 billion, that is 435% of its oil revenue, and 112% of its yearly GNP.<sup>63</sup> This meant that Iraq had to find money quickly. Yet, concomitantly, Iraq had accumulated a rather high debt (see Table 8.2) out of which \$US 80 billion had to be rescheduled just after the war. This corresponds to 1.5 times of their GDP. \$US 30 billion were due to Western civil debt and \$US 16 billion to Western military debt.<sup>64</sup> For 1990, usually \$70 billion are indicated as the Iraqi debt.<sup>65</sup>

This debt was contracted mainly through public bilateral creditors, as COFACE for France, ECGD for the UK, Hermes for the FRG, SACE for Italy, MITI for Japan, and Eximbanks of different countries including Turkey. Some international banks, in particular Arab banks and the now famous American (Atlanta) branch of the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro* provided the credits. There is also a possible financing by Gulf states. Iraq has only a small income from foreign investments, in particular from assets in Japan. Iraq's wish not to render the debt and the whole financial situation transparent and probably also not to run an austerity program that would have impinged on the military budget, deprived it of multilateral credits, such as the more favourable World Bank credits.<sup>66</sup> The military budget was responsible during the war for a third of Iraqi GNP (32% in 1986) and amounted to \$US 14 billion in 1988.

The movements of the current balance of payments (see Table 8.3) did not give any reason for hope, if military spending were not drastically cut, or oil incomes drastically raised. Sources different from the one quoted in Table 8.3 speak of \$US 13 billion for oil exports, which is (un)balanced civilian imports of \$US 12 billion, military imports of \$US 5 billion, debt repayment of \$US 4-5 billion and private transfers of \$US 1 billion. In this

<sup>61</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Les enjeux d'une crise", p. 9; Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", pp. 14, 17-18.

<sup>62</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> Abbas Alnasrawi, "Iraq: economic consequences of the 1991 Gulf War and future outlook", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1992), p. 336.

<sup>64</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", pp. 6-7; Alexander Cockburn and Andrew Cohen, "The Unnecessary War", p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 27; Ursula Braun, "Epizentrum Kuwait ...", p. 60.

<sup>66</sup> For this paragraph, see Benoit Parisot, "La situation économique et financière de l'Irak à la mi-1990. Quelle influence sur la décision d'envahir le Koweït?", *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), pp. 39-41.

Table 8.2 The total amount of Iraqi debt (1988)

Iraqi Debt (data from 1988)	(billion US\$)
<b>I. General debt</b>	
short-term .....	6.21
long-term .....	6.68
Total .....	15.37
<b>II. War Debt With Arab countries</b>	
Total .....	30-40.0
<b>III. Military Debt With Western countries</b>	
France .....	4-5.0
Total .....	8-10.0
<b>IV. (Military) Debt With USSR</b>	
Declared .....	6.38
Estimated Total .....	10-20.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	
excluding Arab debt .....	37-50.0
(220%-370% of yearly foreign currency income in 1989)	
including Arab debt .....	67-90.0

Source: Benoit Parisot, "La situation économique et financière de l'Irak à la mi-1990. Quelle influence sur la décision d'envahir le Koweït?", *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 37.

account the deficit grows by \$US 10 billion per year.<sup>67</sup>

The Iraqi government had both to adapt its war-economy to peacetime and to satisfy the population with a peace dividend.<sup>68</sup> Yet the domestic economic situation was not making it easy for the Iraqi government. 200.000 soldiers came back from war and had to be integrated into the labour market of the civil economy. Food production was both insufficient (food imports stood at \$US 750 million in 1989, i.e. 70-80% of food supply) and expensive, because the government had to subsidise prices. For example, it spent yearly \$US 700 million for wheat. Although not a very populated country, the demographic growth is one of the highest in the world, 3.6%, or 1 million every 14 month.

As a short-term economic expedient, the Iraqi government accelerated a "liberalisation" program which had slowly started in 1979 with the privatisation of agriculture and

<sup>67</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", p. 19. For the US\$ 4 billion in annual debt service by 1990, see "Economics factors in the invasion of Kuwait", *Overseas Development Institute* (London: Briefing Paper, March 1992), p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït. Un pétro-dinar belligène", p. 7. For the following figures, see also: Elizabeth Picard, "Le régime irakien et la crise", p. 26.

**Table 8.3 Iraqi Current balance of payments 1988 and 1989**

Current balance of payments	(in billion dollars)	
	1988	1989
Exports . . . . .	11.5	15.0
Imports . . . . .	- 9	-10.5
Military Imports . . . . .	- 3.5	-3.0
<b>Trade balance</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Interests (due, not necessarily paid) . . . . .	- 2.6	- 2.8
Other debt services (e.g. of foreign firms) . .	- 0.8	- 1.1
Private transfers (e.g. immigrant transfers) .	- 1.1	- 1.1
<b>Current balance</b>	<b>- 5.5</b>	<b>- 3.5</b>
foreign currency ratio	ca 50%	ca 25%

Source: Benoit Parisot, "La situation économique et financière de l'Irak à la mi-1990. Quelle influence sur la décision d'envahir le Koweït?", *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 38.

continued with the liberalisation of import trade in 1984. It was designed to stimulate domestic production and investment. In February 1989, some traditionally state-controlled prices were liberalised. Prices soared between 6 and 10 times and as a result, income inequality increased within Iraq. Thus, price controls and subsidies were reintroduced, e.g. a 30% increase of the cotton price in spring 1991. Two scapegoats were sacrificed: in the spring of 1989 the Finance Minister, Hikmet Mukhalifm, and the acting Agricultural Minister, Abdallah Bader Damouk, were removed from their positions. Yet as long as 95% of the national income is linked to oil, which remains nationalised, the private sector is by definition quite limited. In the repressive environment, entrepreneurs are not induced to invest, they bid for short-term profit.<sup>69</sup>

Sandwiched between domestic and foreign requirements, Hussein was, as is usual for international or regional hegemons, tempted to export the problem. First, Iraq tried, unsuccessfully, to exchange its sacrifices during the war for advantages from the West.<sup>70</sup> Then, the Iraqi government turned to the Gulf countries for more money and investment, but the flow was relatively scarce. Finally, it attempted to get OPEC to agree to higher oil prices, stating that every Dollar of a cheaper barrel oil costs around \$US 1 billion income to Iraq.

When nothing worked, Iraq escalated by trying either to get money directly from the Gulf states (via debt relief and/or new credits) or via higher oil prices. It threatened a

<sup>69</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, "Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait", p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", pp. 6-7.

change in its own behaviour, becoming, in effect, a professional “racketeer”. Iraqi requirements and Kuwaiti intransigence triggered the spiral of escalation.

During the First Gulf War, Iraq had arranged that others could take over its OPEC quota, including Kuwait. When Iraq asked the Gulf states to cancel the war debt, Saudi Arabia accepted, Kuwait did not. Iraq, furthermore, asked Kuwait to pay for a possible oil drilling of the Rumaila oil-field that deprived Iraq of some of its oil reserves. During a visit to Kuwait in February 1990, the Iraqi Oil Minister, Isam Abd al-Rahim al-Chalabi, apparently pressured his hosts to abide by the new oil quota set by the OPEC earlier that year. A message was delivered to King Fahd to pressure Kuwait and the UAE to abide. In May, at a OPEC minister meeting in Geneva, both Iran and Iraq asked for a price of \$18/barrel. The Arab Summit meeting in Baghdad in May 1990 was marked by a clear statement by Hussein, that the Kuwaiti overproduction was considered a form of economic war and that Iraq would respond. In June 1990 Dr Sa’adoun Hammadi, Hussein’s chief economic adviser, made a Gulf tour that had no effect. Only on 10 July, during a coordination meeting of the Gulf oil ministers in Jeddah were new quotas and prices accepted.<sup>71</sup> The 21 \$US/b fixed on 26 July 1990 during the OPEC meeting in Geneva was already possibly influenced by the deployment of Iraqi forces 10 days earlier at the Kuwaiti border.<sup>72</sup> As Kuwait did not really give in, invasion followed. As Tareq Aziz later stated, asked to choose between starvation and war, Iraq chose war.<sup>73</sup>

In short, the concept of “political security” seems critical, stressing the difficult domestic legitimacy of Saddam Hussein’s regime. In the first Gulf war, where Iran was consciously attacking the domestic legitimacy of Iraq, “political security” was an external trigger for war. In the second Gulf war, it would be fairer to say that Iraq itself caused its political insecurity and war became an expedient to resolve domestic problem. In this reading, again, aware of its financial and political weakness, Iraq tried to link and use the leverage of the one issue-area in which it was powerful for controlling other issues.

Thus, the invasion becomes the second-best choice. It is the result of a double power imbalance in the region. Since Kuwait’s financial power was not “equilibrated” with Iraq, equilibration was sought via military means. When the client refuses the offer, the shop was burnt: “... l’opération a été d’abord un racket violent qui a mal tourné.”<sup>74</sup>

### **2.3. Oil security**

Oil is one of the reasons why the regional structure has acquired a certain independence after 1973 and why it remains of “vital interest” for the developed countries. The securitisation of economic resources in International Relations took a formidable step forward in 1973 with the end of Bretton Woods, the resulting pressure on commodity prices, as

<sup>71</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, “Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait”, pp. 21-22.

<sup>72</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Le Golfe, un an après l’invasion du Koweït”, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91”, p. 158.

<sup>74</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Le Golfe, un an après l’invasion du Koweït”, p. 9.

for oil, and finally the first successful organisation of an primary resource embargo by the OPEC.<sup>75</sup> The very discussion of economic security is often couched in terms of oil.

This made it all the more natural to expect oil to be one of the alleged triggers of the conflict, this time not for the Kuwaiti invasion, but for the US response. Different interpretations were advanced.

The most straightforward explanation was to look at the market shares and export figures of Arab oil to specific countries in order to assess the exact dependencies. The result is a story where the US appears relatively independent of Arab oil, whereas European states and especially Japan import Arab oil massively. The US depends on 9%, Western Europe on 37% and Japan on 51% of oil coming from the Gulf.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, many commentators in the US dismissed the argument that the US was so keen to react to Iraqi aggression because of (its own) economic security.<sup>77</sup>

This view is, of course, much too bilateral and issue-centred. In a coopting move, many writers seemed to reduce the insights of interdependence to the “securitisation” of different low politics issues, such as trade or finance. Such an approach is, however, already part of the Realist literature which, as long as it was influenced by the actual study of wars, was always aware of the importance of different economic power resources for national security. National security studies are by definition mercantilist. The integration of themes of interdependence into security analysis means more.

It also meant, for instance, a linkage with other security issues. The oil price is important for the international economic conjuncture, pressing on indebted countries of all sorts and crowding out money that could be invested otherwise than for oil consumption. In this reading the “Carter Doctrine” has become an incidence of “benign hegemony.” This doctrine was established shortly after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, when Western politicians feared that the USSR was not much interested in Afghanistan as such, but in a territorial expansion to a “Warm” Sea in order to diminish its geopolitical landlock or “icelock” with its Northern harbours. Carter declared on 23 January 1980 that “any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”<sup>78</sup> Many of the commentators, especially in the US, perceived the Gulf crisis as a comparable threat. The

<sup>75</sup> It is, however debatable, if the oil embargo as such was a success. Although the oil price quadrupled (in dollar), the oil companies, also the national ones, were able to redistribute the oil independent of the will of the producers. On top of it, there were no real shortages: the price rose, but the existing strategic oil reserves remained untouched.

<sup>76</sup> For the figures, not the argument, see Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold and Daniel Unger, “Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf War”, *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 39-75.

<sup>78</sup> As quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 345-46.



theoretical argument for the outbreak of a conflict as a result of a power shift in a specific security sector, seems to apply to the US reaction.

But finally, there might be another way of linking this economic security issue not only to another security sector, like military security, but to other security complexes. It is a long-standing argument that the US uses its leverage in the control of the oil market to induce reluctant allies to “share” whatever the burden of the day is. This argument took its origin in the situation starting in 1973, where concomitantly US power seemed to be in decline and oil became, for a while, a strategically controllable resource.

At that time, the US was preparing itself to accommodate its declining power. The Nixon administration had come to think of security and power defined in other than strictly militarily terms and embraced the idea of pentapolarity. In the famous “Year of Europe” speech delivered by Henry Kissinger on 5 April 1973, and in substantial passages of Nixon’s foreign policy report for the 1970s delivered to the Congress during May of the same year, both politicians accepted the idea of a “trilateral” West, that is, a potential tripolar management of world affairs.<sup>79</sup>

European governments were estranged and alarmed by the “burden-sharing” Kissinger announced in this speech: global interests for the US, regional interests for Europe. If he had spoken about global versus regional intervention capacities, it would have been less clumsy. Thus, when the 1973 war broke out, the Europeans were confronted with a region in which they had major interests. Caught between the attempts to speak with Arab countries independently from US positions<sup>80</sup>, and a common Atlantic position, the European governments did not succeed to unite. Whereas Israel won against Egypt and Syria, the US disciplined the rising European power.<sup>81</sup> Thus, already during the first oil shock, the US could restore its leadership via the increasing distance between mainly US oil firms among the “Seven Sisters” and other oil producers and distributors, and because of its preponderance and control in the International Energy Agency put up in 1974 — without France.<sup>82</sup> The French government especially had accused the US of using its leverage in the Middle East (during the 1973 crisis) to exhort Western money for US interests and to streamline Western foreign policy with US aims.

There are obvious difficulties in assessing this kind of arguments, because of the underlying notion and measure of power. Those who argue that the US (government) lost control on the oil regime refer generally to the increased energy dependence and reduced

<sup>79</sup> See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 282.

<sup>80</sup> Raymond Aron, *Les dernières années du siècle* (Paris: Julliard, 1984), p. 157. Since 1973, the Europeans, some more (France, Italy), some less (The Netherlands, Germany) envisaged a more moderate position in the Arab-Israeli conflict, that is, the creation of a Palestinian state on the occupied territories.

<sup>81</sup> For an example of the mood at the beginning of the 1970s, see Max Kohnstamm & Wolfgang Hager (eds), *Zivilmacht Europa — Supermacht oder Partner?* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1973).

<sup>82</sup> Alfred Grosser, *Les Occidentaux. Les pays d'Europe et les Etats-Unis depuis la guerre*, rev.ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1981), p. 379. In its attempt to remain relatively independent in its foreign policy elaboration, France pursued first a policy of oil provisions via bilateral contracts, that turned out expensive once the oil price slumped, and finally an ambitious nuclear energy policy.

direct control of resources after partial nationalisations in producer countries. Those who see US leadership unchanged refer to the issue of distribution where the US (meaning “US based” multinationals) are still unchallenged.<sup>83</sup> Ghassan Salamé notes accordingly, that since 1990 the US controls, via Saudi Arabia, the oil market on which their consumption depends since 1990 for more than 50% (in 1996, maybe 60%).<sup>84</sup> Once again, so runs an analogous argument in 1990, the US could use its higher independence from Arab countries and its unique diplomatic and military position in the Middle East to armtwist the West into “burden-sharing”, to compensate the relative economic power decline of the US. The Gulf Conflict is thus linked via oil to the “trilateral” security complex. The US, perceiving an economic security threat, might have taken the opportunity to use it for responding in another theatre not to the South, but to the West.

### 3. Conclusion: The Gulf in search of an equilibrium

For Neorealists, conflicts are the catalyst of an equilibration of power. Quite logically, the security complex is conceived as the result of the historical sedimentation of different prior power shifts and equilibria. A security analysis introduces a long-term dynamic by projecting the continuity of past conflicts and playing out their contradictions. After the profound changes in the region, namely the establishment of the Israeli state, decolonisation, and the East-West conflict overlay, three important power shifts have affected the regional security complex. All three are marked by concomitant shifts in both the regional and the central balance. 1973, 1979, and 1988 are the three milestones on the way to the Kuwait invasion.

1973 was important because OPEC and the oil revenues enhanced the autonomy of the Gulf substructure and the strategic importance of the entire Middle East enormously. The rich Gulf states became major actors of the regional security structure. The regional balance of labour from poor countries in exchange for capital from rich countries was installed. The Western partners became even more dependent on the US. The October (Yom Kippur) War ended the Egyptian humiliation from 1967. Thus, Egypt could reaffirm its traditional aspiration of an Arab leader, which was contested by Iraq and Syria.

The twofold events of 1979, Israeli-Egyptian peace and the Iranian Revolution produced a security structure with very issue-dependent alliance formations. In the words of Udo Steinbach, this rising complexity of security spawned a “diffusion of power”.<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, the Iranian Revolution turned Iran from a status quo into a revolutionary

<sup>83</sup> Noam Chomsky writes that “as late as 1973, the U.S. controlled about 90% of Japanese oil.” See his “After the Cold War: U.S. Middle East Policy”, in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds), *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), p. 77.

<sup>84</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Le Golfe, un an après l’invasion du Koweït”, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> Udo Steinbach, “Krisenherd Naher Osten. Machtdiffusion als Folge wachsender Komplexität des internationalen Sicherheitssystems”, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 18/86 (3 May 1986), pp. 1-18.

power.<sup>86</sup> It added a new ideological dimension to the Middle East conflicts, thus complicating the already intricate regional power plays even more. Although the ideological conflict between Shi'ite Islamism and Panarabism would have it that every Arab nation joined Iraq in this conflict, Syria, Libya, and South Yemen allied with Iran. Israel leaned towards Iran. Egypt supported Iraq in the conflict, although the latter had done most to kick Egypt out of the Arab League. The Gulf states helped both Iraq and Syria (which supports Iran), deriving their Arab credentials merely from their unvaried anti-Israel stand. Seen independently, one can find the rationale also in terms of power equilibrations. Yet, the power game is so multi-layered to deceive easy front-lines.

On the other hand, the separate peace between Egypt and Israel, consummated with the aborted talks on a Palestinian solution from May 1980, marked a temporary end for the Egyptian aspiration to Arab leadership. It took the major Arab power away from the structuring of the region and pushed the moderate oil countries, as well as Jordan and Morocco, to ally with countries they usually opposed. The result was double. First, Egypt left a power vacuum in Arabia which was officially endorsed by its exclusion from the Arab League in March 1979.<sup>87</sup> Second, since Egypt was the actor bridging both the Gulf and the Middle East, the anti-Israel front and the moderate Arab countries, its demise furthered a division of the Middle East into two major blocs: the Gulf and the Near East. The centre of the Arab nation moves east. Syria and Iraq waited to fill the power vacuum and to take the lead. Their relations deteriorated rapidly in the second half of 1979, after Iraq accuses Syria to have helped a coup against Saddam Hussein in July 1979.<sup>88</sup> Since both superpowers had "spent their regional credit" in the Gulf, the US for Camp David (1978), the USSR for the invasion in Afghanistan (1979/1980), Iraq took the initiative to fill the power vacuum left.

1988 or: the end of the Iran-Iraq war in an international climate of East-West détente, was the last milestone on the way to the Kuwait invasion. The war had frozen or concentrated the power of the two potential Gulf hegemon. The end of the war and the relative Iranian defeat left Iraq strong, but financially highly dependent on its neighbours. The Gulf states tried to coopt Iraq through the establishment of the *Arab Cooperation Council* (Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq), founded in 1989. This was, in other words, an attempt to institutionalise and ease the racket system of the first Gulf war after the war had finished. It did not work. Sandwiched between domestic and external demands, the highly inflexible Iraqi government broke out of the system. The finance-labour balance was not enough to stabilise the security system. Egypt's continuing and Arafat's increasing isolation after the

<sup>86</sup> For this issue of change unaccounted by Neorealism, see also Fred Halliday, "'The sixth great power': on the study of revolutions and international relations", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (July 1990), pp. 207-221. This is difficult to include into a mechanic power analysis, less into a security analysis, because it takes the identity of actors as given.

<sup>87</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale, und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 12.

<sup>88</sup> Udo Steinbach, "Krisenherd Naher Osten", pp. 6-7.

abortive peace talks (Baker Plan) furthered the division between the two subsystems of the Near East and the Gulf. At the same time, the USSR's "New Thinking" with the retreat from the Cold War logic and of any regional expansionism left the US in a unipolar position. Iraq filled a regional power disequilibrium when the division of the Gulf subsystem both from the central and Near East balance seemed to isolate it from foreign intervention. The response came from the central balance.

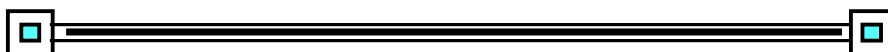
In this synthesis of the Gulf conflict's origins, all the important items of the specific "policy-contingency framework" are given. The important and mutually valued resources, whose control defines the historically and regionally contingent potential power, are finance capital, oil, military forces, ideological legitimacy, political legitimacy.

Neorealist explanations of the origins of the Gulf conflict link the distribution of mutually valued resources (objective security), to the assessment of bilateral or multilateral situations of interdependencies, and then to (subjective) security assessments that trigger the conflict. If a conflict arises that cannot be linked to objective security considerations, then the balance of power argumentation in its mechanistic sense cannot be held to be a sufficient explanation. This point is important. It is said that Neorealism would be able to show the range of possible options. Neorealism at its most fundamental level shows which actions are possible and which ruled out from the outset. Together with its unit-level assumptions, Neorealism, as much as the Morgenthau-kind of traditional Realism, can assess the options that it would be rational to pursue. This argument runs with a *ceteris paribus* clause, that is, if one actor is not pursuing the national interest, but all the others do, the first will be punished. This is the "logic of power." Yet, if the others do not or do not want to apply their resources, the whole mechanism collapses. Neorealism as an approach of the systemic level needs its enactment at the unit-level. Since actors are not mechanically following a short-term rationality, Neorealism can only make sense of what happened *ex post*.

Thus, a security analysis cannot stop here. It is the temporary stop of a *rational actor model*. It can still be supplemented by a number of *ad hoc* explanations all based on a form of misguided subjective assessment of security or insecurity. There is, first, the possibility of complete miscalculation or insufficient decision-making bodies. Then there is the possibility of straightforward irrationality. But all this is outside the power structure. It refers to the "unit-level." From now on the Neorealist story has to be told on the level of *action*. We are not interested in the mechanics of the mutual adjustments of the countries, but in the actual behaviour of governments. The story is now told in terms of diplomacy and warfare.

## 9

### **The dynamics of the conflict: overcoming the “Vietnam Syndrome”**



The analysis of the power structure was necessary to see the “balance of threats”, that is, the security of those that resorted to conflict. Implicitly, this introduces the actors of the conflict. Now, turning to the level of action, power analysis is concerned about one thing: Do the actors involved in conflict convert their anticipated power resources into means to resolve the conflict in their interest? How? Which regimes have constrained a potentially unfettered power contest?

Interestingly, the whole dynamic of the Second Gulf War concentrates on the capacity to mobilise US superiority, a clear reaction against the perceived Vietnam Syndrome. In terms of power analysis, overcoming the Vietnam Syndrome means resolving the “paradox of unrealised power”. Baldwin insisted that power resources should only be addressed in their policy-contingency framework. The mapping of the regional security complex is a partial specification of this framework: it names the relevant actors, their conflict-relevant resources, the scope and domain of these resources, and the relative costs that an actor would incur in breaking a relation that is the anticipated power response of the “powers” in the system (See Figure 9.1).

The translation dynamics of a Neorealist power analysis has as its main focus the way the US succeeded in managing its power in diplomacy and war. The story is the success-story of a superpower that for once lived up to expectations. The war was waged at three fronts, all conditioned by the alleged US failures in the Vietnam war: the allies, the domestic and international public opinion, and the military front in Kuwait/Iraq. The best way to describe them is thus in negative terms. The first war-story is about diplomacy. It is called “intervene, but not alone.” It is about avoiding international isolation and to getting others to contribute to world policing. Then, “watch the stab in the back”, from the media, public opinion and Congress. The third lesson is the avoidance of gradual escalation which was supposedly the strategy in Vietnam.

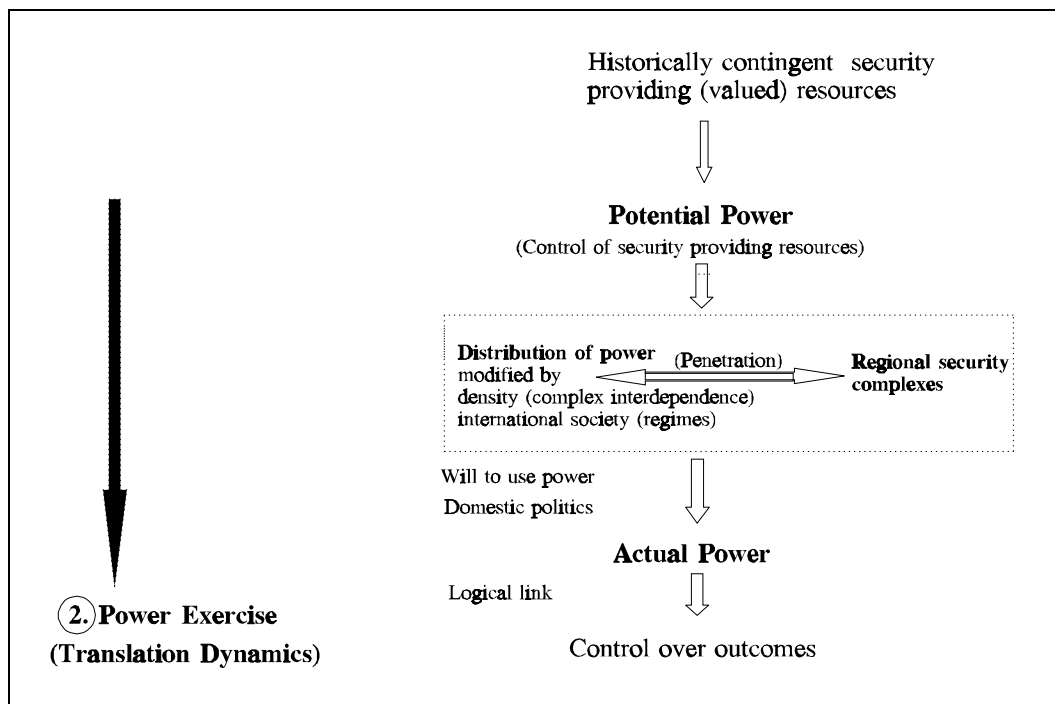


Figure 9.1 Power dynamics: the translation process

## 1. The multilateralisation of the conflict

The end of the US-Soviet tension made a new kind of superpower-management possible. As in the Korea-war, the US was able to orchestrate a multilateral response without the USSR intervening or blocking it. Yet, as in the aftermath of the October (Yom Kippur) War in 1973, *both* superpowers would incite, watch and guarantee a post-war settlement in the form of a regional security conference.<sup>1</sup> The underlying logic seemed to be that as long as there was a central equilibrium, the US tried to coopt the USSR into a superpower management following Western rules. When the US was hegemonic, it preferred unilaterally guided (although multilaterally orchestrated) actions without the support of the USSR. The Gulf Conflict appears as a special case where an asymmetric common management was established although the USSR knew its secondary position. The USSR ceased to be a comparable actor in the Gulf and saw its regional interest shifting to Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> The logic of the Cold War seemed no longer to apply for the Middle East.

<sup>1</sup> It is often forgotten that the conference that started in Madrid is not the first of its kind. It is a replay under some changed circumstances, and with some new actors of the abortive Geneva Middle East conference in 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Lomme, "L'échec d'une stratégie soviétique", *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 437.

On the theoretical level, this part touches many of those analytical frameworks which are the centre of present academic debates. At first, multilateralism deals with questions of cooperation and, since Neorealism is built on an economic approach, thus of collective action. The Realist presumption of anarchy, which underlies both Neorealists and Neoinstitutionalists, makes conflict the basic feature of international society. The fact that such a heterogeneous coalition could have been forged and sustained over a not-so-short period of time is the riddle to be explained.

The two schools of thought differ in the basic reasons for multilateralisation. To use the established wording, the one could be called idealist in the Grotian, not the Kantian tradition. The “international society” has moved to a stage where both the blatant disrespect of state sovereignty and gun-boat diplomacy are no longer possible. The translation of US or Western power into outcomes needed acquiescence on the international scene. International legitimation through established channels is the inevitable basis of such a management. The story of the Second Gulf War becomes

- (1) a chronicle of hope that the UN would for the first time play the more peace-enforcing role for which it was (also) set up; and
- (2) an indication of how established patterns of trust can sustain the working of binding norms the “international society”. It is a story about the potential of learning.<sup>3</sup>

The second interpretation is more Realist, that is, it has its doubts about the validity of these norms. Whereas Institutionalists tend to apprehend possible long-term dynamics of norm-building, Realists tend to analyse every collective action, conflict or cooperation, independently of the precedent one. Not learning, but the continuous replay of power politics is the basic assumption. Realists would point to a consistent US move to “unilateral intervention”, not caring much if the invasion of Grenada, or the bombing of Tripoli or Panama conformed with the norms of the international society. For the more Realism-inclined regime analysts, multilateralisation is either an indication of hegemonic leadership or of rational balance of power politics. The underlying power argument can be twofold and is the core of the present debate on US hegemonic decline. For the one side, the Gulf Conflict required multilateralisation for mere reasons of military and political costs. This means that the US was not powerful enough to sustain a full-fledged war alone, both for its financial costs and for the political costs of the possible isolation it would have entailed. Yet, one could also see therein the ultimate power of a hegemon which controls the conflict management and let others pay for it.<sup>4</sup> This perspective of the power dynamics tells a story of hegemonic leadership, free-riding, and “burden-sharing.”

<sup>3</sup> For this renewed stress on “learning”, see Robert Keohane & Joseph Nye Jr, “Power and Interdependence Revisited”, *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987), pp. 725-53. For an application to organization, see Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power. Three Models of Change in International Organizations* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1990). For an idea of learning as a civilisational process, see Dieter Senghaas, *Konfliktformationen in internationalen System* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), Part 1.

<sup>4</sup> Once again, power arguments are not decisive.

### 1.1. The UN against Iraq

US Secretary of State James Baker and his Soviet counterpart Edward Shevardnadze were discussing in Irkutsk, Siberia, how to strengthen their collaboration in regional conflict-management, when they were informed of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They interrupted their talks and headed back to their governments. Before leaving, their common statement emphasised that both powers took this act very seriously and would collaborate closely to coordinate a common response. The same day, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously voted a resolution that condemned Iraq's attack (Yemen was absent during the vote). The following day, the US and the USSR pleaded to the international community to take "concrete measures" against Iraq. The US decided to send a naval force to the Gulf.<sup>5</sup>

From the first day of the conflict, many important foreign policy moves were "insured" *ex ante* or *ex post* by twelve resolutions of the UNSC before the outbreak of "Desert Storm" (see Table 9.1). James Baker is reported to have initiated the idea of using the UN in an aggressive way, against the opinion of both the White House and Pentagon.<sup>6</sup> The diplomatic efforts in the UN were designed to isolate Iraq and possible allies, and to legitimate US intervention under its own and not UN auspices.

This is not the place to make an extensive account of all the countries the US tried and succeeded to influence in order to get UN backing. The USSR is the most prominent case, although one could reasonably argue that it had its own interests as a regional power in the Middle East, bordering its Muslim Republics. Generally, two Soviet stakes were quoted. James Baker could offer to the USSR \$US 6 billion financial aid paid by the Gulf States in consideration of the Soviet vote. Yet, the most visible *quid pro quo* between Gorbachov and Bush was that the US and the West in general was remarkably quiet with regard to the Soviet handling of the Baltic declarations of independence, in particular when special Soviet units attacked the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, occupied the TV/Radio station and just stopped short of overthrowing the Landsbergis government.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas the USSR's new role could be expected, China was able to exchange its vote on the important resolution that allowed the use of force "if necessary", for a restoration of its international status after the isolation that followed the army crackdown on Tienanmen Square in June 1989. Thereby, the Gulf crisis accelerated a return to normality that had started with the restored diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in July 1990, with Indonesia in August 1990.<sup>8</sup> The economic sanctions imposed on China, such as delays of new World Bank loans and the freeze on most military cooperation, were anyway of little weight: ordinary exports to the US were not included and in fact the trade surplus

<sup>5</sup> "Sept mois de crise", *Le Monde*, 1 March 1991.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance: Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Singapore followed a few months later.



**Table 9.1** The UNSC Resolutions during the Gulf Conflict

**1. 2 August 1990: Immediate retreat of Iraq from Kuwait** (resolution 660, accepted by 14 votes, Yemen was not present), where the Security Council (SC), in virtue of art. 39 and 40 of the UN Charta, demanded the immediate and unconditional retreat of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the return to the *status quo*.

**2. 6 August 1990: Economic sanctions** (resolution 661, accepted by 13 votes, Cuba and Yemen abstained), in which the SC asked for a commercial, financial and military boycott, including Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil.

**3. 9 August 1990: Annexation of Kuwait declared nil** (resolution 662, unanimously accepted).

**4. 18 August 1990: Against the detention of hostages** (resolution 664, unanimously accepted). The SC demanded that Iraq authorises the citizens of third countries to leave Iraq or Kuwait.

**5. 25 August 1990: Authorization of naval blockade to enforce the economic embargo** (resolution 665, 2 abstentions of Cuba and Yemen).

**6. 14 September 1990: Food aid** (resolution 666, 2 contrary votes by Cuba and Yemen), where the delivering of food aid to Iraq and Kuwait was agreed only under the auspices of international bodies like the UN or the International Red Cross.

**7. 16 September 1990: Condemnation of Iraqi attacks on foreign embassies** (resolution 667, unanimity).

**8. 24 September 1990: Internal resolution of the embargo** (resolution 669, unanimity), where the “Sanctions Committee” was asked to examine all the claims of those countries who suffer economically from the embargo.

**9. 25 September 1990: Air embargo** (resolution 670, Cuba against).

**10. 29 September 1990: War damages** (resolution 674, 2 abstentions from Cuba and Yemen). The SC reminds Iraq of its responsibility under international law to repair the damages it inflicted to Kuwait and its citizens.

**11. 29 November 1990: Preservation of demographic composition of the population of Kuwait** (resolution 677, unanimity).

**12. 29 November 1990: Authorization to use force for the liberation of Kuwait** (resolution 678, 2 contrary votes by Cuba and Yemen, 1 abstention by China), where the SC puts an ultimatum: if Iraq does not comply to the UNSC resolutions by 15 January 1991, the SC authorises all countries on the side of Kuwait “to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore peace and international security in the region.”

**13. 3 April 1991: Conditions of cease-fire** (resolution 687)

rose sharply from \$US 3.5 billion in 1988 to around \$US 10 billion in 1990.<sup>9</sup> Where the US had most leverage was on questions of international prestige. China resented being ignored in important international or even Asian affairs, as for instance the Cambodia or Afghanistan settlement.<sup>10</sup> In order to help China get rid of its international pariah image, the Bush administration announced on 27 November, one day before the decisive Security Council vote, that China’s Foreign Minister Qian Qichen had been invited for talks in Washington on 30 November. This represented the highest-level official meeting between

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “China gains in Mideast crisis but loses Cold War benefits”, *The New York Times*, 11 November 1990, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “Beijing thawing diplomatic freeze. Western and Asian countries renewing relations as Li triumphs on tour”, *The New York Times*, 15 August 1990.

the two governments since June 1989. After this announcement, “Chinese diplomats at the United Nations, who had been wavering on whether to support the proposed Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq, signalled definitely that they would not oppose it.”<sup>11</sup> This move of the Bush administration was immediately followed by the approval on 4 December of a World Bank-sponsored \$US 114.3 million loan to China. It was the first time the administration did not object to other than humanitarian assistance to China since Tiananmen Square.<sup>12</sup>

One could go on with a list of all the pressures to which the countries of the Security Council were exposed. Columbia, Ethiopia and Zaire were offered new aid packages, access to World Bank credits or IMF loans for their vote. Columbia was quietly allowed to renounce its treaty with the US to extradite major drug traffickers to the US. Malaysia, another member of the UNSC, got a break on textile import quotas.<sup>13</sup> Cuba and Yemen were threatened, with no success. When Yemen voted against the resolution, “within minutes the Yemen ambassador was told by an U.S. diplomat that it was the “most expensive vote you ever cast” and within days Yemen’s \$70 million in U.S. aid and vital financial aid from the Gulf states was terminated.”<sup>14</sup>

There are two important points for the power analysis of the Gulf that derive from this account of multilateralisation. First, it shows that “linkage” of power resources happened in two ways. There was a link of power resources from one issue area (international finance) to another (international politics). However, this may only be one part in a chain of different power resource conversions. After all the vote in the UNSC was just a step in a larger conflict, in which the US was able to mobilise its resources in different regimes to prepare the ground for a successful military intervention, on which the administration attempted to “cash in” politically and economically.

This links up with our discussion on overall-power and fungibility (see chapter 6). Military power cannot necessarily be translated in other issue areas. It should be understood as the capacity to be present in different issue areas, and to be able to link them. “Superpowers” are defined by this capacity. If one forgives the exceptionalist tone of some US commentators, the following quote reflects the point:

American preeminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “Chinese Official is Invited to Washington in Response to Gulf Stance”, *The New York Times*, 28 November 1990, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Traditionally, China received World Bank loans of around US\$ 2 billion per year. See Stephen Labaton, “World Bank Lends China \$114 Million”, *The New York Times*, 5 December 1990, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>14</sup> Steve Niva, “The Battle is Joined”, in Phyllis Bennis & Michel Moushabeck (eds) *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Oliver Branch Press, 1991), p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, p. 24.

The other important point comes back to the initial neorealist-neoinstitutionalist debate. Some commentators believe that the recourse to a “fake” multilateralism is due to domestic US public opinion that just loves idealist stances.<sup>16</sup> Yet, if Vietnam is the reference for the understanding of the Gulf Conflict dynamics, it seems more sensible to presuppose that it is in the long-term US interest in the region not to appear as an isolated full-fledged imperialist. The Vietnam experience indicates the possible diplomatic backlashes of such a position. The need to multilateralise meant especially the need to coopt Arab partners into the coalition. These needs constrained the US to a certain UN conformity.<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly, the constraints might always been thrown off, but the relevant issue was how great a price would be paid for doing so. Even those who resisted tying American policy to the UN, as the architects of the new world order did, nevertheless conceded that the tie might well be important for maintaining domestic support for an interventionist policy.<sup>18</sup>

In order to focus all US power, it was important to free the other fronts. A possibly unilaterally led war presupposed a multilateral diplomacy. Otherwise, the “cost” for intervention would have been higher. In other words, the UN had become an obligatory passage point for an efficient power management of the Kuwait war. The UN mattered both because it channelled US action, but also because its institutionalised channels speeded up the forging of cooperation and thus US intervention.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2. Forging a coalition

If the obligatory passage point of the UN can be expected to concentrate some attention of Neoinstitutionalist rational choice scholars, the Neorealist rational choice agenda will focus on the Gulf conflict as an incident of alliance theory in general, and of hegemonic leadership, free riding and burden-sharing in particular.

Again, this is not the place to enumerate all the coalition partners involved. I will pick those for which theories of collective action reserve a special role: the hegemonic leader and the free-riders. Already from the theoretical setting, it should be expected, that one of the major themes of the analyses of the Gulf conflict will be burden-sharing.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Arnold, “Die Golf-Krise und die Vereinten Nationen”, *Außenpolitik*, vol. 42. no. 1 (1991), p. 77.

<sup>18</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation. The New World Order and America's Purpose* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1992), pp. 41-42.

<sup>19</sup> This corresponds to Keohane's minimal version of regimes as intervening variable between the international division of power and the behaviour of international actors, where regimes “are less important as centralized enforcers of rules than as facilitators of agreement among governments.” See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony. Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 64, 238.

<sup>20</sup> For such an approach, see Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold and Daniel Unger, “Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf War”.

The following short account will concentrate on these issues. More precisely: why and how did the coalition partners join the coalition (alliance theory); why and how was the cost shared (collective action)?

Although the attempt to multilateralise the burden of the conflict makes it obvious that the US should get Arab partners to join the coalition; it is not so clear why they should have obliged. Traditionally, Arab countries have been suspicious of being used by foreign powers. Although the major coalition partners Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, were all wary of Saddam Hussein's foreign policies, Egypt had to take a lead in splitting the Arab world, Saudi Arabia had to accept foreign troops on the Holy Land, and Syria had to realign with an outspoken traditional enemy, the US.

Syria is the least critical case. It has already been dealt with in the above section on realignments after the end of the superpower competition in the region. Furthermore, Syria was keen on a *quid pro quo* which would leave its Lebanese policy undisturbed.

Egypt might have been induced by tough US pressures.<sup>21</sup> It is highly vulnerable and dependent on US financial aid and other help and had thus only limited room of manoeuvre. This would be the most "rational" and most power-based explanation. Of course, if it were true, the US and Egypt could not admit it. Mubarak repeatedly stressed that he found himself belied by Saddam Hussein's assurance he would not invade Kuwait, although it seems that Saddam Hussein had given this promise on condition that his aims could be reached diplomatically. Egypt's vigorous stand was paid off by high war dividends. The US took the lead and cancelled \$US 7 billion military debt (which implies economies of debt servicing of \$US 780 million for 1991). Saudi Arabia followed suit the cancelling \$US 6 billion of debt and giving \$US 2 billion in aid. This was followed again by a Kuwaiti aid of \$US 500 million. Since September 1990, the negotiations within the IMF have gradually shown increasing comprehension for the Egyptian case.<sup>22</sup>

The most critical case is Saudi Arabia. Many commentators stress the point that Saudi Arabia was initially not willing to accept US troops. Its traditional policy was a form of check-book diplomacy. Its reading at the beginning of the conflict seemed to have been that Iraq, which had recently signed a treaty of mutual non-aggression with Saudi Arabia, and not with Kuwait, was punishing Kuwait for what it perceived as permanent humiliations. The aims, according to the apparent Saudi understanding of the conflict, were limited to Northern Kuwait and a new money settlement. There was no overriding sense of national vulnerability. After all, these border disputes had been common currency since Kuwaiti independence. Iraq had not officially nullified Kuwait's sovereignty. It took a gage or "security" for a future bargaining, putting Kuwait in a position in which it could

<sup>21</sup> John K. Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", *Survival* vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (March-April 1991), pp. 125-139, reports a senior Arab source insisting that John Kelly had sent a secret message to Cairo threatening with aid cuts. Both countries deny it.

<sup>22</sup> Alexandre Bucciatti & Yves Heller, "Les dividendes du conflit en Egypte", *Le Monde*, 27 février 1991.

not but take Iraq seriously.<sup>23</sup> The possible invasion of Saudi Arabia was the only major argument for the quick decision to deploy troops in the Gulf.

Did Iraq really intend to invade Saudi Arabia? For the staunch military observers, there is no doubt. Saddam Hussein planned to drive to a line south of Dharan to seize Saudi ports and oil. That Iraq paused for so long before launching its attack is explained away by insufficient logistics and troops that paused for looting Kuwait.<sup>24</sup> This is contradicted by articles appearing in *The Times* and *The New York Times* from 3 and 4 August reporting very unaggressive behaviour by the Iraqi occupation troops.<sup>25</sup> Other commentators refer to US intelligence that reported about Iraqi strategic planning of a Kuwaiti invasion going back to two, and perhaps five years, and which has been exercised in special manoeuvres.<sup>26</sup>

Then there are the famous intelligence photos showing the massing of Iraqi troops at the Saudi border. Cheney took those with him, when he convinced King Fahd on 6 August in Jeddah to accept foreign troops on his territory. Although it is considered difficult to judge from such photos, and although future shots did not corroborate the first US ones<sup>27</sup>, the immediate response had to rely heavily on them. Yet, why then did Iraq not attack the US forces that arrived on 8 August? For some experts, the so-called “minimum-deterrence force” would be just a “speed bump”, its 40 000 troops not able to defend the territory against a full Iraqi attack.<sup>28</sup> Since Saddam Hussein thought that the US could not sustain a war with high casualties, this would have been perfectly rational behaviour. Yet, only some days later, on 9 August, troops of the Iraqi Republican Guard, the backbone of Iraqi military force and vital for any offensive option, were moving northwards.<sup>29</sup>

The important point to note for the study of alliance dynamics is, however, the following. Once the US had decided for Desert Shield and persuaded Saudi Arabia of the immediate Iraqi attack, the Saudis asked for three conditions, namely (1) that Arab countries should be part of the troops, (2) that Saudi Arabia had a veto on offensive options from the Saudi territory, and less officially (3) that the US would come “for good”, that is, keep their promise and stay firm. The last condition is probably the most important one: once committed to the West, the Saudis must push for the complete isolation of Iraq, politically and in fact also militarily, in order to be able to face Iraq once the conflict is over.

<sup>23</sup> More Machiavellian readings suggest that a weakened Kuwait would not only strengthen Iraq but get squeezed in-between Iraq — and Saudi Arabia.

<sup>24</sup> Norman Friedman, *Desert Victory. The War for Kuwait* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1991), pp. 40-41.

<sup>25</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Gunther Hellmann, “Der Krieg um Kuwait: Katalysator einer „neuen Weltordnung“ oder Vorbote neuer Konflikte?”, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 7-8/91 (8 February 1991), p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, pp. 20-22.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 100-02.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

By doing this, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the US in fact reduced their own diplomatic options. Once Saudi Arabia agreed and the US announced it publicly on 9 August, the day before the Arab summit, there was no way back: the fate of the Arab coalition partners was inextricably linked to US success. If the US could not afford to retreat without regaining Kuwaiti independence, the Arab coalition partners, and in particular Saudi Arabia, could not even conceive of such an option. Their alliance with the US would have isolated them regionally, threatened their legitimacy as the guard of Mecca and Medina (thus making them prone to Iranian pressure), and left them alone with a major and resentful enemy on its border. The above-mentioned “Al Capone”-theory would be more effectively institutionalised than without the US engagement. Thus, US insistence had created a conflict dynamic which produced an overriding coincidence of interests. In the language of alliance theories, Saudi Arabia was caught in an alliance security dilemma: the more it committed itself to the US stance, the more its security improved, but also the more it got “entrapped” into the US alliance. Power, thus dependence-oriented alliance - analysis of the Gulf conflict should concentrate not only on static dependence patterns *before*, but also their change *during* the conflict.<sup>30</sup>

It seems without doubt that the US was eager to exploit the opportunity to realise its objective of a permanent military presence in the Gulf. James Baker indicated this aim already in June 1990.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the Saudi and Egyptian incidents seem to indicate that the US, in particular James Baker, consciously avoided any second diplomatic track by other countries or multilateral fora, like the UN. With the entrapment of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the short effort of forging an intra-Arab solution had come to an end.

Aware of the strains this “entrapment” entailed for many of the regional coalition members, on 25 September, President Bush announced the creation of the Gulf Financial Crisis Coordinating Group (GFCCG). It was largely politically motivated to smooth the impact of the embargo on regional trade partners of Iraq. As of 11 March 1991, \$US 11.7 billion of the \$US 15.7 billion aid-packages pledged by different countries were committed to Egypt, Jordan and Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

US diplomacy geared to European countries was either asking military or financial contributions. The multilateralisation and UN roofing allowed many countries to join the largest coalition ever organised since 1945 (see Table 9.2). The US made it clear from the very beginning that those countries that were rich enough to contribute had a duty to do so. This was especially true of Germany and Japan, which for constitutional and other reasons were not able to take part in Desert Shield or Storm militarily.

<sup>30</sup> For an interesting comparison of different alliance approaches applied to the Gulf conflict, but for a static presentation of “alliance dependence”, see Andrew Bennett, Joseph Leggold and Daniel Unger, “Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf War”, pp. 39-75.

<sup>31</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*, p. 40, fn. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Isabelle Grunberg, “The Persian Gulf War and the Myth of Lost Hegemony”, in R. Morgan, J. Lorentzen, A. Leander & S. Guzzini (eds), *New Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World. Essays for Susan Strange* (London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), p. 250.

**Table 9.2 Contributions in kind:** Countries that had sent forces or medical teams to the Gulf region by the time the ground war started.

Afghanistan	300 ground troops
Argentina	One frigate and one corvette
Australia	One guided-missile destroyer, one frigate and a support ship
Bangladesh	2.000 ground troops
Belgium	Two minehunters and a support ship
Britain	43.000 troops: Army, Navy and Air Force
Canada	3 ships, 24 fighter jets
Czechoslovakia	200 anti-chemical warfare specialists
Denmark	One corvette
Egypt	40.000 ground troops
France	16.000 troops: Air Force and Navy
Greece	One frigate
Gulf countries (Bahrain, Omar, Qatar, UAE)	10.000 troops: ships and planes
Hungary	Medical personnel
Italy	Ships and planes
Kuwait	7.000 troops, planes
Morocco	1.300 ground troops
Netherlands	Two frigates and a supply ship
New Zealand	Planes
Niger	500 ground troops
Norway	One coast guard ship
Pakistan	11.000 ground troops
Philippines	Medical personnel
Poland	Two rescue ships
Rumania	Medical team and anti-chemical warfare specialists
Saudi Arabia	118.000 troops, planes.
Spain	One frigate and two corvettes
Senegal	500 ground troops
Sierra Leone	30 Medical personnel
Singapore	Medical team
South Korea	Planes
Sweden	Field hospital and medical personnel
Syria	15.000 ground troops
United States	More than 540.000 troops: Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force

Source: "Gulf Allies and the Forces Deployed", *The New York Times*, 24 March 1991, p. 18 L.

Japan had already pledged \$US 4 billion to aid the gulf mobilisation in 1990, half of it for economic aid to the region and the other for assistance to the military buildup, restricted to payment for transportation and other non-combat costs.<sup>33</sup> Domestic

<sup>33</sup> Steven R. Weisman, "Test for Japan's Leader. Kaifu Faces Growing Difficulty in Building A Consensus on Tokyo's Role in Gulf War", *The New York Times*, 8 February 1991, p. A7.

opposition did not permit the Japanese government to send military forces. By February 1991, when the Japanese Parliament was deciding whether to follow the request by the United States for a supplementary \$US 9 billion in Japanese aid<sup>34</sup>, the result of the vote was far from clear. A small party whose swing votes were necessary to pass the Upper House, could condition the aid, so as to link it to “logistic” and not “lethal” use.

The total cost of Desert Shield is estimated at about \$US 10 billion, those for Desert Storm before the outbreak of the ground war between \$US 37.5 and \$US 75 billions. When President Bush presented the balance of the war cost on 22 February 1991, he indicated \$US 52 billion, including overpriced fuel costs. The final cost seems to have been \$US 61.1 billion.<sup>35</sup> Military power was exchanged for Arab, German and Japanese money. The UK got by February 1991 \$US 1.04 billion from the FRG and \$US 509 million from Saudi Arabia, as well as \$US 1.3 billion from Kuwait, for a total cost of \$US 2.5 billion (up to the end of January). France’s total estimated costs of about \$US 1.2 billion were largely covered by a Kuwaiti aid of \$US 1 billion.<sup>36</sup> (See also Table 9.3).

**Table 9.3 Contributions in cash or in kind to the United States (\$US millions)**

Contributor	Commitments*	Cash**	In-Kind**	Total
Saudi Arabia	16.839	12.809	4.030	16.839
Kuwait	16.057	16.015	43	16.058
UAE	4.088	3.870	218	4.088
Japan	10.012	9.440	571	10.012
Germany	6.572	5.772	683***	6.455
Korea	355	150	101****	251
Others	30	8	22	29
Total	53.953	48.064	5.669	53.733

\* Commitments do not include pledges to other countries

\*\* Cash received as of 13/4/92, In-Kind as of 31/3/92

\*\*\* Does not include \$US 200 million in in-kind donations, declined after war

\*\*\*\* Does not include \$US 200 million in in-kind donations DoD could not use. However, the Korean Government had agreed to contribute an equal amount for material and services for non-Desert Shield/Storm costs  
(Addition errors are due to rounding.)

Source: Isabelle Grunberg, “The Persian Gulf War and the Myth of Lost Hegemony”, p. 255.

<sup>34</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “Japan’ Premier Backs a Compromise on Aid for the Gulf War”, *The New York Times*, 2 February, p. A6, reports that after a first denial, the US made the request public.

<sup>35</sup> See respectively, “Qui paie quoi?”, *Le Monde*, 3-4 février 1991; Mario Pianta, “La guerra? Un vero affare”, *Il Manifesto*, 10 March 1991, p. 21.; and Theo Sommer, “Schöne neue Welt, bloß eine Traum?” (Brave New World, only a dream?), *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 32 (2-8 August 1991), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Érik Israelewicz, “Le prix de l’engagement”, *Le Monde*, 27 février 1991, p. 19.



### 1.3. Shortcircuiting competing diplomacies

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Kuwait remained largely isolated within the Arab world. On 3 August, during a special session of the Arab League Council, only the United Arab Emirates responded positively to the Kuwaiti demands for the restoration of its sovereignty. In a frantic effort to come to a settlement, King Hussein shuttled between Baghdad and Arab capitals to organise a mini-summit in Riyadh for 4 August. Saddam Hussein agreed, if the Arab League Council would not condemn him. By this time, unexpectedly or under US pressure, Mubarak had changed his position.<sup>37</sup> He pushed for an inter-Arab division and aligned with what was seen as the US position. The mini-summit was cancelled. King Hussein efforts were in vain. Then, the US convinced King Fahd in Jeddah of the need to accept US troops. The next day, Iraq annexed Kuwait. The Arab summit conference on 10 August could only make the Arab split public. Overriding the unanimity norm of the Arab summit, it accepted a resolution condemning Iraq, and legitimating the Arab presence in Desert Shield. Arab pre-war diplomacy had come to its final end.

In the same vein, US diplomacy attempted to avoid any diplomatic “split” of the coalition, a policy that implied the preponderance of US foreign policy objectives in coalition goals. Not being able to avoid the UN, the US joined the multilateral train as engine driver. Other diplomatic efforts had to be subsumed under US direction: the French, the Soviet and the remaining independent Arab diplomacy (Jordan, PLO).

French and Soviet diplomacy followed a double track of negotiated resolution and alliance solidarity. *French diplomacy* would have by far preferred an inner-Arab solution.<sup>38</sup> War was considered a no-win solution, at least by the French Minister of Defence during Desert Shield, Jean-Pierre Chevènement.

... la guerre serait un jeu où l'on perdrait à tous les coups, soit que Saddam Hussein tire son épingle du jeu, soit que l'Irak, écrasé, l'intégrisme se trouve avivé, et fouetté dans la monde arabe. Donc il fallait tout faire pour empêcher la guerre.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, French diplomacy mobilised behind the economic embargo which had been decided on by the UN, and tried to link the Gulf security to other subsystems of the security complex: the Near East with the Israeli-Arab conflict and Lebanon. In his famous speech at the General Assembly of the UN on 24 September 1990, President François Mitterrand presented a plan in four steps: (1) Iraq accepts to retreat from Kuwait; (2) actual retreat linked to a democratisation of Kuwait (elections); (3) bilateral negotiations to settle the conflict whose solution should be guaranteed and supervised by an inter-

<sup>37</sup> The Egyptian account of this event differs. Here, Mubarak had never agreed to King Hussein to avoid a public condemnation against Saddam Hussein.

<sup>38</sup> Frédéric Prater, “La France et la crise du Golfe”, *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 442.

<sup>39</sup> “Ce qui manque à notre république, c’est le citoyen”, Entretien avec Jean-Pierre Chevènement, *Le Nouveau Politis*, no. 177 (Avril 1992), p. 22.

national conference; finally (4) a kind of Middle Eastern Conference for Security and Cooperation to supervise mutual arms reduction. A similar diplomatic opening was repeated in a last minute opening on 13 January. Yet, when Saddam Hussein seemed not to be answering favourably to any of the diplomatic opening gestures, the French position increasingly moved toward the US one.

These most prominent diplomatic attempts were not exactly welcome by all the parties to the coalition. The international conference, linking the Gulf with the Near East, was not particularly appreciated in Washington and Tel Aviv. The French proposal for democratic elections provoked resistance in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It was a compromise formula intended to meet one condition which Iraq insisted on for its withdrawal: the replacement of the Emir and the El-Sabah family from the Kuwaiti government. All the other conditions presented officially by Saddam Hussein were less important. Cockburn and Cohen, for instance, report an Iraqi backchannel proposal from 23 August, where neither the link to Palestinians nor the US troop withdrawal was required. The *New York Times* admits to having suppressed the news of this proposal, because unconditional withdrawal from Iraq was the official policy line of the Bush administration.<sup>40</sup>

Following an opposite trajectory, *Soviet diplomacy* was moving from close collaboration to more independent diplomatic manoeuvres. This coincided largely with the shift in the power balance between the line of close collaboration with the US pursued by Shevardnadze, and the traditional pro-Arab, and particularly pro-Iraqi line still diffident toward the US, as represented by Gorbachov's special emissaire to the Middle East, Yevgeni Primakov. Once again, Soviet interests changed slightly during the conflict. The chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact, General Lobov, linked the US presence in the Gulf to European arms-reduction talks and warned against US influence on the Soviet transcaucasian republics. Informations circulate that the Soviet passed intelligence and secretly shipped arms to Iraq. Schewardnadse's successor Bessmertnykh was asked at the beginning of February 1991 to assure that Iraq could get Soviet arms.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the USSR took up where French diplomacy left off; it was voting in favour of all the resolutions, yet promoting its plan of a Near-East Conference, linking the Gulf to the Near-East. This was repeatedly refused by the US, for the first time at the meeting between Bush and Gorbachov in Helsinki, beginning in September 1990. The USSR remained very sceptical about the strong US military presence, yet could not avoid a military solution, because Hussein was not in the least accommodating. In the last days before Desert Storm, the USSR had improved its relations with Iran, which was the only country to really back

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, "The Unnecessary War", pp. 19-20. For a report of many unofficial signs that Hussein wanted a compromise, see Arnold Hottinger, "Die Golf-Krise am Rande des Krieges".

<sup>41</sup> Olga Alexandrova, "Der Golf-Konflikt in der sowjetischen Politik", *Außenpolitik*, vol. 42, no. III (1991), pp. 234-37.

Soviet diplomacy — also with independent proposals.<sup>42</sup> “The most important, and perhaps the most unexpected, was Iran’s proposal for a large UN buffer force to patrol the Iraq-Kuwait border (a contingency for which the UN had already drawn up detailed plans).”<sup>43</sup>

The last Soviet diplomatic attempt in mid-February would have required an unconditional withdrawal of Iraq for the scratching of the UNSC resolutions against it, all monitored by countries not directly involved under the aegis of the UNSC. Yet, the declaration of the Iraqi Revolutionary Council at least officially attached some conditions to an Iraqi retreat, more or less the same as on 12 August 1990: the retreat of Israel from occupied territories, the “democratic” basis of the new Kuwaiti government (getting rid of the Emir), the recognition of Iraq’s historical rights (the non-recognition of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border), and so on. Iraq’s move came too late and offered too little.

Even though after the massive air attack, some of the wider objectives of the coalition could be guaranteed, the US government decided to torpedo the Soviet attempt. Bush put an ultimatum independent of possible negotiated solutions. He declared that Iraq’s offer was “nothing new”. The air-attack was not going to stop in order to allow the retreat. At this point, diplomacy was a burden: President Bush wanted to get rid of the Iraqi threat.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, the US and the UK governments resisted the French and Soviet initiatives. No conditions should be accepted. In the long run, such a position of a repetitive US “no” would, however, have been unsustainable. In order to let off the diplomatic steam of its coalition partners, thus, the US had to present diplomatic options as well. In response to the French diplomatic offensive, Bush announced before the UN on 1 October that the US aimed at a kind of general reshufflement of the major regional problems, namely Iraq-Kuwait, Gulf-Iraq, Arab-Israeli. This was probably the last time that such a link was mentioned before the outbreak of Desert Storm. Just after the decisive vote on the use of “all necessary means”, James Baker made a second diplomatic offensive starting at the end of November. Called “the extra mile for peace”, it consisted in a proposal of a meeting of Baker and Hussein in Baghdad. Iraq accepted and released the hostages, but the date (12 January) was finally refused by the US. This was seen as a humiliation by Iraq.<sup>45</sup>

These diplomatic manoeuvres were difficult to reconcile with the intransigent position of “aggression does not pay” and “this will not stand”. Those more inclined to punish Saddam Hussein by force criticised it consequently for giving the latter an unwelcome

<sup>42</sup> Aware of the US hegemony in the Gulf, Iran aligned overtly with the USSR during the conflict. See Roland Lomme, “L’échec d’une stratégie soviétique”, *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 436.

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Rogers, “Wanted: A New Policy for the United Nations”, in Victoria Brittain (ed.) *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), p. 145.

<sup>44</sup> For this analysis on the day after George Bush’s declaration, see Jan Krauze, “Attendre jusqu’au K.-O.”, *Le Monde*, 17-18 février 1991, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, p. 20.

room of manoeuvre.<sup>46</sup> Yet, in a “logic of power” view, it made sense because (1) the negotiation rounds were necessary for the military build-up<sup>47</sup>; (2) the US had to win on the domestic front, getting the Congress to vote for war. They were necessary side-shows for an efficient translation of US power into influence over outcomes.

#### 1.4. The domestic front: luring Congress and electoral cycles

Vietnam was lost at home. The Bush administration proved very skilful in circumventing any Congressional debate and interference that would have hampered its flexibility to manage the conflict — which meant at latest since late October to go to war. When finally opposition organised, the agenda was well set.

The Baker strategy to multilateralise the conflict proved most important for the management of Congressional opposition. Before the first Presidential speech, two important UNSC resolution in which the Iraqi invasion was condemned had already been passed. The Presidential decisions to send forces to Saudi Arabia and to enforce the embargo via a blockade were taken before anyone else (except foreign allies) were asked. This policy of *faits accomplis* was the leading thread of the administration’s strategy on the domestic front.

Bush justified the decision to send troops without consulting Congress by pointing to his position of supreme military commander. The Congress was going along, yet it probably did not see a US offensive as a realistic option. Otherwise the blockade, an act of war, would have required a vote.

This first period was characterised by two issues, (1) if there were vital interests at stake in the Gulf which would justify an intervention and (2) if, as it was perceived in the US, there was an international call for US intervention, there should also be an international payment for it. The administration was well aware that, with the budget discussion in progress, any further financial weight would be judged unacceptable. The pressing for burden-sharing became a necessary tool to get domestic agreement. Thus the official line was, that troops were sent there for defensive purposes, and were paid for it by others than the US.

The next step was to prepare Congress for war. Once the resolution which, in the general reading, justified the use of armed force was passed at the end of November, Baker, in preparation for war, made an “extra mile for peace”.<sup>48</sup> This resolution turned

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, Geoffrey Kemp, “The Gulf Crisis: diplomacy or force?”, *Survival*, vol. XXXII, no. 6 (November-December 1990), p. 514.

<sup>47</sup> Although this military build-up does not imply its use, but just the credibility of its threatening position, the conflict dynamic makes it difficult for the US to retreat. Thus, the time-consuming diplomacy has been analysed by many commentators as purely instrumental. See, for instance: Arnold Hottinger, “Die Golf-Krise am Rande des Krieges”, pp. 1-2; and Lothar Rühl, “Der Krieg am Golf. Militärischer Verlauf und politisch-strategische Probleme”, *Europa Archiv*, no. 8 (1991), p. 239.

<sup>48</sup> We will see later, whether this diplomatic offensive was meant to avoid war or the “nightmare scenario”.

out to be a very powerful argument in the end, because the administration could point out that the Congress could not prevent what the international community was asking for. The general interest of the world was at stake, and here was Congress making petty arguments about prerogatives.

Meanwhile, the administration tried to uphold the idea that Bush could go to war without congressional consent. This was patently wrong, and the attempt spurred the first major Congressional resistance. The war had to be approved by Congress and the administration was finally forced to open the call for a vote. But again the agenda was set. Having patiently waited for the mid-term elections, the administration had dispatched another 200.000 NATO troops from Germany. With half a million soldiers and one ultimatum from end november, the administration has forced its own hand: any retreat from war would be an indication that the US was bluffing and not keeping its promises. This is a very interesting agenda-setting policy, often used to enhance credibility in threats and to enforce commitment: it consists in consciously limiting one's own options. The honour of the US was at stake. The vote was very close, giving right to Saddam Hussein's gamble that the US would never do it.

But Vietnam did not only mean that domestic politics somewhat hampered the otherwise invincible US, it could also mean a catastrophic electoral defeat in the US. Yet, the even worse danger was a "Carterisation" of the Bush administration, i.e. "a reputation for inconsistency and appeasement, a foreign crisis that left the initiative to the adversary and was a daily reminder of the limits of American power, and incessant and enfeebling attacks from the right."<sup>49</sup> The 1990 midterm elections provided a foretaste of electoral defeat. The Carter syndrome was haunting. Bush was criticised from the Republican Right for his budget compromise, having lied on taxes. Neoconservative columnists asked whether the president's abandonment of his pledge on taxes was a foretaste of his readiness to abandon his pledge of Kuwait.

## 2. Influencing the public opinion

For countries that are used to win wars and consider themselves major powers, to lose represents a major shock. Thus, the Weimar Republic remained for its short existence riddled with a collective memory of a "stab in the back", fostered especially by the military headquarters, the Nationalist movement of the DVP and later the Nazis. The First World War was lost and yet it was fought nearly entirely outside German territory, the frontline at the time of the armistice being far away from the German heartland. Thus, many Germans were eager to accept a story of having been sold out by the politicians, the press, the left — in short, all those that made up the core of the following Republic. The war was lost at home.

<sup>49</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 130.

Something similar happened with regard to the Vietnam War in the US. Once again the war was far away, and, so the story goes, the press and especially television was endowed with the power to end wars at the domestic front, crippling the effort to win on the battlefield. Following the “logic of power”, the US had to win. If it did not succeed in Vietnam, it was a question of demoralisation that inhibited its power. It lacked the will. Someone had to be blamed for it. The circle most discredited became the so-called liberal (or East coast) foreign policy establishment, including the major press organs.

Several lessons were drawn from this experience for the management of the Gulf conflict. It was a two stage process or two-front fight. On the one hand, domestic public opinion had to be enmeshed in an idealist propaganda to overcome the resistance to foreign intervention. The Vietnam Syndrome was to be overcome by mobilising the collective memory of Second World War with anti-appeasement as a basic rationale and anti-Hitlerism as a demagogic tool. On the other hand, the “information regime” was to be strongly agenda-controlled so as to avoid negative news.

### 2.1. Crisis propaganda

Reminiscent of Weber’s definition of power, Philip M. Taylor defines “propaganda” as

simply a *process of persuasion* ... Propaganda is one of the means by which the adherents of a particular cause seek to (sic!) engender such views in an audience which would induce a desired perception of what is actually going on, and lead to them acting in a desired way, involving amongst other methods the deliberate selection and omission of accurate information.<sup>50</sup>

Taylor uses “propaganda” in a way that presupposes intentionality, but not necessarily falsehood. In some of the following cases, the propagandists who try to mobilise collective memories, symbols and connotations, might do it believing in the correctness of the analogies. Their intentional use to attain a specific response is, however, enough to classify this form of persuasion as a power exercise.

James Baker legitimated the quick and decisive US reaction with the argument that in the Gulf, so central to world energy, oil and thus the “US way of life” was at stake. The allusion was to the oil shocks of the 1970s. On 14 November, Baker spoke of Iraq cutting the Western “economic lifeline.” He said that jobs were threatened. Although the economic crisis would make this argument sound powerful, it did, however, fail to mobilise necessary support. Thus, very quickly the collective memories to which policy-makers alluded, shifted; the anti-totalitarian mobilisation for the Second World War (and the Cold War) was reactivated. It might have been the first conflict of the after-Cold War; it undoubtedly used the symbolic capital of the Cold War. Saddam Hussein, as Ayatollah Khomeini before him, became a Middle Eastern counterpart to Adolf Hitler.

<sup>50</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *The War and the Media. Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 18-19.

It was a specific item of the Second World War memory which assured finally that the public (and eventually also the US Congress) legitimated US intervention of a larger kind. In mid-November, a major *New York Times* poll indicated that 54% of respondents thought one reason to be good enough to resist Iraq's invasion: to preempt Iraq from becoming a nuclear power. This argument, used from the very beginning of the crisis by pro-Israeli commentators, as for instance William Safire and A.M. Rosenthal<sup>51</sup>, was diligently inserted in Bush's speeches. On Thanksgiving Day, Bush visited the troops in Saudi Arabia. There, alluding to Iraqi's nuclear potential, he stated that Saddam Hussein "has never possessed a weapon he hasn't used."<sup>52</sup> The argument resounded strongly, and understandably so. It had mobilised the US legitimisation for the nuclear program during the Second World War. Now it justified a rapid reaction to preempt Saddam Hussein, although the argument was for a long time neglected when democratic politics and Human Rights were not much better served.<sup>53</sup> In the Gulf, the US was fighting the Second World War to win Vietnam.

In an attempt to mobilise especially the Arab public, Saddam Hussein had to mount an impressive propaganda battle of his own during the crisis leading up to Desert Storm. After all, it had to be forgotten that he had won the First Gulf war with the visible help of the US. The conspiracy theory the Iraqi government constructed was publicised by Saddam Hussein on 1 April 1990: Iranians were used by the West and pushed into the war, where the West then helped Iraq.<sup>54</sup> Hence both appeared as victims. This was important to avoid a conspiracy theory of the kind that since the Iraq resistance helped (and was helped by) the West, Iraq was a Western imperialist puppet. As Jean Leca rightly notes, there is a reasonable kernel of truth to this argument insofar as the West was interested both in stopping Iranian expansionism and avoiding Iraqi hegemony. It encouraged a war "without winners, or losers."<sup>55</sup>

The Second Gulf War was even more difficult to sell. Iraq attacked a fellow Arab country. The direct US intervention provided it with the possibility of deflecting Arab disarray towards the US and indirectly to those who sustained the coalition. Iraq appealed to Arab collective memory by making analogies to the crusaders and to colonialism. Saddam Hussein could make use of existing conspiracy theories, where the West is seen as applying a *divide et impera* policy. Iraq thereby appeared in the tradition of Arab

<sup>51</sup> A few days after the decision to deploy forces in the Gulf, these US columnists were asking for "at least" the destruction of Iraqi's weaponry of mass destruction. See Andreas Rieck, "Der Golfkrieg als Schlüsselereignis für den arabisch-israelischen Konflikt", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 7-8/91 (8 February 1991), p. 43.

<sup>52</sup> Steve Niva, "The Battle is Joined", p. 64.

<sup>53</sup> Ghassam Salamé, "Les enjeux d'une crise", p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> "Discours de Saddam Hussein aux membres du Commandement général des Forces armées", du 1er avril 1990, Document in *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Jean Leca, "Aux origines de la crise: le discours des acteurs", *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 130 (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 46.

leaders facing the West and defending Arab dignity. In this perspective, he could also use religious motives such as the presence of non-believers in Saudi Arabia, and eventually, call for a *jihad*, which would legitimate military action also against other Arab countries to the extent that they made common cause with the West. The use of the distributional argument for the one and indivisible Arab nation could thus be applied as a legitimization of the invasion.

The major propaganda issue during the conflict was the attempt to link the Gulf to the Palestinian problem (for double standards) for activating anti-imperialism via anti-zionism, and transposing the image of Israel being a Western “lackey” (or Trojan Horse) to the Arab coalition partner. This cancelled the effect of the Arab condemnation of his occupation as “un-islamic”. The latter was completely forgotten after 15 days.<sup>56</sup>

## 2.2. War-news management

Vietnam is the main reference for a double media war. The first aspect of this war is that the Bush administration wanted to avoid a rising resistance at home and abroad that would be fostered by pictures of war cruelties. This meant a control of the news in order to produce the “clean” war of “surgical strikes”. The second aspect has been alluded to before. News become a psychological weapon. It is not only a burden of US policy to be contained, but a coercive medium to be exploited.

Thus, the direct use of the media-management for the enhancing of power consists in the control of media resources for the power holder’s purposes, in other words, straightforward propaganda. This form of direct power exercise does not need much introduction. It has been extensively used by all the major actors in the war, with the US, as already seen, leading during “Desert Shield” and Iraq, *faute de mieux*, during “Desert Storm”.

The best known example from the side of the coalition is the dying, oil-smeared crested cormorant, the supposedly innocent victim of Saddam Hussein’s environmental warfare. As it appeared rapidly, the images were taken at another place at another time.<sup>57</sup> As is frequently the case with propaganda, it works because it is based on “half-truths”. There was indeed a (smaller) Iraqi-provoked oil spill and Saddam Hussein was later to prove not innocent of environmental warfare when he set Kuwait’s oil fields on fire. When the disinformation was revealed, the media coverage was much less intense.

Iraq sought for very long to hide the Iraqi civil casualties so as to avoid national demoralisation. Only later, from the 11 February onwards, did the Iraqi government try to use images of dead women and children to show the coalition to be “coward” murderers of innocents. When the shelter or bunker in Amiriya, a relatively well-off district of Baghdad, was attacked on 13 February, the Iraq succeeded in creating the

<sup>56</sup> Ursula Braun, “Epizentrum Kuwait”, p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, pp. 80-82.



impression that the coalition's "smart" weapons were used deliberately against civil targets. Since the coalition was pushed on the defensive, anxious of the Arab coalition partners' reaction, this has been judged a propaganda victory for Iraq.<sup>58</sup>

Let us, however, rather concentrate on the second strategy of media-management, besides propaganda. It is a form of *news containment* exercised mainly via the establishment of obligatory passage points, that is, it is a form of indirect power through agenda-setting. News containment followed a set of tactics. In order to control public opinion, the Bush administration tried and largely succeeded in containing the production and distribution of news both within the US, and in the Gulf.

With regard to the isolation of anti-war journalists at home, a politics of intimidation was pursued by administration agencies. As the report of the *Fund for Free Expression* states,

There have been several instances of retaliation against journalists who have questioned the propriety of the war. After he wrote approvingly of an antiwar march, *San Francisco Examiner* associate editor and columnist Warren Hinckle was put on a partially paid three-month leave ... The editor of the Kutztown, Pennsylvania *Patriot* was fired after he wrote an editorial calling for peace. *Village Voice* national affairs editor Dan Bischoff was cancelled as a guest on the CBS news "Nightwatch" program. The Pentagon refused to provide anyone to appear on the program if the *Voice* was to be represented among the participants. The program's producer recalls a Pentagon representative as objecting on the grounds that "if someone from *The Village Voice* is on, that raises the possibility that there will be a discussion on the merits" of the lawsuit filed by the *Voice* and other media organizations challenging the Pentagon press restrictions. The Public Broadcasting System postponed a rebroadcast of a Bill Moyers "Frontline" program on the Iran-Contra affair, because, according to an internal PBS memo, the program's raising of "serious questions about then-Vice President Bush's involvement and actions" make it "journalistically inappropriate" during the war against Iraq, because the program could be viewed as overtly political by attempting to undermine the President's credibility.<sup>59</sup>

At the front, the strategy was relatively sophisticated. In this respect, the battle on the information front drew on the lessons from a series of wars, including Vietnam.<sup>60</sup> The Reagan administration was very impressed by the media management of the British during the Falkland (Malvinas) War in 1982. The British Marine took 27 journalists with them,. They were allowed to dispatch their reports via the marine broadcasting - after careful "clearing". TV reports were not even allowed. The media management during the Grenada invasion in 1983 was modelled accordingly. For the first two days of the invasion, the US

<sup>58</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 222.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Grace Paley, "Something about the Peace Movement. Something about the People's Right Not to Know", in Victoria Brittain (ed.) *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), pp. 72-73.

<sup>60</sup> For the following, see in particular: Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, Kuno Kruse & Birgit Schwarz, "Zensoren, Voyeure, Reporter des Sieges. Im Golfkrieg triumphiert die Propaganda", *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 6 (1-6 February 1991), p. 16.

public saw only Cuban uniforms and weaponry — Pentagon material designed to show the advance of international communism. 300 reporters were sitting in Barbados. Any attempt to come close to Grenada was, also militarily, avoided. The major networks protested, and the administration changed the logbook. The Panama invasion in 1989 was to become the precursor of the Gulf war. Selected reporters were pooled and flown in to Panama, their news gathering from the operation “Just Cause” delayed and then cleared. Thus, the US tried to make a compromise between Falkland and Vietnam, via the lessons of Grenada and Panama.<sup>61</sup>

The result was an elaboration of the newspool-system that the UK used during the Second World War. The idea is to select a number of journalists from all the media branches, to attach them to the troops, to let them rotate, and to pool their news for all the journalists present in Saudi Arabia. The system was built around three bases in Saudi Arabia: the Joint Information Bureau (JIB) in Dhahran, the arrangements for daily press briefings in Riyadh, and the pools attached to the armed forces at the front. Since for the 1500 - 2000 journalists who had arrived in the region, there were about 200 places in the pools, the bulk of reporters was dependent on the Riyadh daily briefings organised for them in the Hyatt Hotel by the US, British and Saudi Arabian military authorities<sup>62</sup>, and on the “Jiblers” in Dhahran, who often had the last say.

The control of the information flow was organised at two neuralgic points. To control the *sourcing* of information, only an indirect system could be trusted; for the *transmission* this and direct censorship was applied. The system worked relatively well — for the military.

The “containment” of the information-gathering was multi-layered. First, there were no pool places for journalists from other countries than the UK, the US and France.<sup>63</sup> This indirectly controls the news by inducing the production of information the war-fighting countries’ opinion — and not the neutral ones — are most interested in. It provided largely a Anglo-American view. Second, the pool-journalists attached to land troops have obvious troubles with covering a war which was fought largely in the air and by night. In that respect, the news became dependent on static TV pictures (“fireworks”) made by some big networks in the large cities (Baghdad, but not the much more damaged Basra) and in particular on the prepared tapes delivered by the military.<sup>64</sup>

Once the news-production was contained at its source, different neuralgic points of its distribution was checked by the military. Pool-journalists to US troops were not allowed to use portable satellite dishes for direct transmission (and thus sometimes used the British ones). All the written news were checked by information officers at the level of the troops (field-censorship), the tapes at the level of the pool. They were dependent

<sup>61</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 36.

<sup>62</sup> The French had an independent briefing in a hotel next door.

<sup>63</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 52.

<sup>64</sup> In order to have impressive tapes at hand, US military equipped some of the “smart” weapons, as the GBU-15 bomb, with cameras that showed how bombs reached their targets also via roofs.

on the military for being dispatched to the pool in Dhahran and then again dependent on the speed of the “Jiblers” to make it available for all. Censorship was also used to prevent soldiers from expressing their opinions, once again because of the negative memory of such statements during the Vietnam War.<sup>65</sup> Besides the usual intimidation, journalists were sometimes ordered to leave the pool, as was for instance Douglas Jehl from the *Los Angeles Times*.<sup>66</sup>

Yet, this system would not have worked if the media management had not provided some pieces for the journalists to bite into. General Schwarzkopf said at the time of the Panama war in 1990: “Listen, I ain’t no dummy when it comes to dealing with the press. And I fully understand that when you try to stonewall the press, and don’t give them anything to do, then before long the press turns ugly ...”<sup>67</sup>

Accordingly, the journalists got something to do.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the prepared briefings and military videos, the Joint Information Bureau organised an “entertainment” program for the journalists, as, for instance, the repeated organisation of trips to see the troops. “Hollywood” Mike Sherman was assigned responsible for the program. He directed the JIB between August and December 1990. Based usually in West Los Angeles, Marine Captain Sherman was normally linking-officer to the film industry.<sup>69</sup> The troops were informed beforehand, the visits “contained”, the news content scarce.

This whole media management based on spectacular military videos of the air attack, on the selection and intimidation of journalists, the symbiosis of troops and journalists, the dependence on military news distribution, the censorship; all this together produced a system that gives the military a virtual total control over the flow of information. Consequently, the journalist’s reaction to their own work was riddled with frustration. More and more “unilaterals” working independently of the pool system tried to escape control. Yet, modern warfare made it impossible to assemble a complete picture out of the bits and pieces of news which they were able to find. Consciousness of powerlessness did not help. The information flowed relatively unaffected.

<sup>65</sup> John R. MacArthur, “Operation Wüstenmaulkorb”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 48, no. 9 (26 February - 4 March 1993), p. 44.

<sup>66</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 53. Of course did other states also apply heavy censorship. So did Israel cut the satellite link of NBC following an account of casualties after a Scud attack on Tel Aviv judged premature. By the end of January, Israel tightened the control. The *Newsweek*’s bureau head Theodore Stanger got his press card revoked and the domestic phone calls of foreign correspondents were monitored. Iraq did its best, too, and in much more direct ways. The own news system in centrally controlled, all Western journalists were ordered to leave by the end of the first weekend after the air attack, except a CNN team and Alfonso Rojo from Spain’s *El Mundo*, whose reports were all censored. The aim was more straightforward propaganda. See *ibid.*, pp. 70, 101, 102.

<sup>67</sup> As quoted in Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> The same reasoning applies to Iraq’s reconsideration of its decision to kick out Western journalists. Their reacceptance and the establishment of a privileged channel of media transmission via CNN show that the best way to capture the political *imaginaire* is not to stop, but to direct the flow of news.

<sup>69</sup> John R. MacArthur, “Operation Wüstenmaulkorb”, p. 44.

The first commentators were sometimes heavily criticised for their uncontrolled news coverage. How was it possible that the German ARD<sup>70</sup> correspondent in Washington knew that the US was definitely hitting the right targets and destroyed them? He knew it from CNN. And “CNN knew it from the Pentagon, and what the Pentagon really knew, only the Pentagon knows... The Pentagon succeeded in a surprise attack on the public. The tension built up during weeks exploded in a liberating strike. All, so the journalists trumpeted to the world, was working as planned. *Boom, boom, boom.*”<sup>71</sup> Media coverage was couched in military terms. And indeed, this media “surprise attack” was strategically planned, and part and parcel of US warfare.

After a first inebriety of the massive bombardment of Baghdad, the lightened sky and the satisfaction of seeing the yearned-for attack happen, the high mood gave way to a “hangover”. At least some journalists and commentators tried to recollect what they really saw. The bizarre mixture of first hand and real time images, i.e. the impression of close presence, and of a complete passivity with regard to the unfolding events, created an impression of artificiality, of a *virtual* war. Journalists were sitting in their hotels or in their studios exposed to a flow of information which the constraint of TV-immediacy left them with the mere function of transmitting. News were not made by them, but through them.

### 3. From the “Rapid Deployment Force” to “Desert Storm”

Once the politicians did their work and kept the generals free from unwelcome intrusion, the final story of “Desert Storm” becomes a perfect application of US military power, integrating the alleged lessons of the Vietnam war.

#### 3.1. A Strategy of Counterinsurgency

The history of “Desert Storm” started in 1977.<sup>72</sup> The US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was redrawing US strategy in every region in the world. Ten different military commands would eventually cover the whole globe. In August 1977, Presidential Directive 8 inaugurated a new approach of US presence in the Middle East. Brzezinski was especially worried about the absence of any structure for the Persian Gulf. Yet, instead of a new command, in 1979 the Pentagon decided to create a “Rapid

<sup>70</sup> “Allgemeine Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands”, the public Channel 1 in Germany.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, Kuno Kruse & Birgit Schwarz, “Zensoren, Voyeure, Reporter des Sieges. Im Golfkrieg triumphiert die Propaganda”, p. 15, my translation.

<sup>72</sup> For the following, see U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 43-47; and especially Sheily Ryan, “Countdown for a Decade”, in Phyllis Bennis & Michel Moushabeck (eds) *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Oliver Branch Press, 1991), pp. 91-102. Sir John Hackett notes that already the Kennedy administration had planned a “fire brigade” to be deployed with special transport aircrafts and Fast Deployment Logistics (FDL) ships. The plan fall in disregard with Vietnam, but was resurrected by the Carter administration. Sir John Hackett, “Protecting Oil Supplies: The Military Requirements”, in Christoph Bertram (ed.) *Third World Conflict and International Security* (London: Macmillan/IISS, 1982), p. 50.

Deployment Joint Task Force” that immediately concentrated on Middle Eastern contingencies. President Carter’s State of the Union address of 23 January 1980 was officially aimed against a Soviet threat (after the invasion of Afghanistan). In a comment on Carter’s declaration, the Secretary of Defence Harold Brown claimed that the major threat was not Soviet, but “regional turbulence”. Thus, increasingly the interest turned toward regional hegemony, as for instance Iran and Iraq. Between 23 August 1981 and 3 January 1983, the Rapid Deployment Force was turned into a regular unified command structure, the “Central Command” or CentCom.

The strategic reorientation implied that rapid reaction forces would be used not only to respond to attacks on vital US interests, but to deter them. Sir John Hackett noted in 1982 that

in December 1979, Brzezinski referred, in a little noticed address to the Chicago Economic Club, to the desirability of being able to respond “quickly, effectively and even pre-emptively” (my emphasis).<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, the strategy consisted in preparing “facilities” (bases) to be fully usable in cases of crises or conflicts, to expand the navy forces in the region and in a programme of “prepositioning” of material required in times of a massive troop deployment in the region. The ability to deploy forces massively and rapidly should serve as a deterrent to, and thereby preempt, attacks. Saudi Arabia became the centrepiece of this strategy. Fuelled by the oil windfalls, the Saudi’s budget could finance a spectacular military build-up — which was from the beginning designed to allow the US to come to the Saudis’ defence. Therefore, not weapon systems, but military construction and infrastructure took the lion’s share of the US equipment sold to Saudi Arabia since 1950, 85% out of \$US 50 billion. The \$US 8.5 billion AWACS deal in 1982 was conceived in such a way as to direct Saudi defence not against Israel, but against Yemen, Iran and Iraq, and created the potential to host a deployment of US aircraft in emergency situations.

After the end of the Iran-Iraq war in mid-1988, Iraq quickly turned out to be a major regional threat to US interests. The threat was acknowledged, when the strategic planners of the US Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy focused on Middle Intensity Conflicts, i.e. conflicts with regional middle powers, in particular those with ABC weapon systems. Secret planning was targeting Iraq and Syria.<sup>74</sup> Between 2 and 7 October 1989, General Schwarzkopf made a tour in Saudi Arabia and confirmed that a Iraqi invasion was “probable”.<sup>75</sup> Back in the US, plans for defence were made. In January 1990, General Schwarzkopf had ordered a computerised command post exercise (CPX) to explore

<sup>73</sup> Sir John Hackett, “Protecting Oil Supplies: The Military Requirements”, p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> Michael T. Klare, “Proche-Orient, une guerre de cent ans”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 37, no. 432 (Mars 1990).

<sup>75</sup> Chapour Haghibat, “Les dessous de la guerre du Golfe”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 39, no. 457 (April 1992), p. 14.

responses to an Iraqi invasion of the Arabian peninsula. It was called “Internal Look”.<sup>76</sup> This computer plan became the first operational base for strategic planning immediately after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait.

### 3.2. US strategy from Desert Shield to Desert Storm

Once relieved of the political manoeuvres at home or in the coalition that were allegedly responsible for the bad results of US intervention in Vietnam<sup>77</sup>, and once internationally legitimated, military strategies could work more autonomously of the direct control which characterised Johnson’s command. Many of the Vietnam “lessons” had been learned.

The attack would be massive and not a gradually escalated one, as was the tit-for-tat incrementation of the Vietnam war. “The preferred American response to an Iraqi attack would be the antithesis of US operations in Vietnam. The ensuing war would involve the maximum use of force in the earliest hours of the fighting.”<sup>78</sup> In a similar vein, military objectives were clearly set. It was, to use Marine Corps Major General Robert Johnson’s words, like “real estate somewhere down the road”, not the enmeshed objectives of a civil war in the Asian jungle. The goal was first of all the seizure of territory, the liberation of Kuwait. In order to assure victory on the battle ground, the attack was not limited to the front, but was brought to the “heart” of Iraqi forces. This reflected the strategic shift that happened already at the end of the Vietnam war. Indeed, the very destruction of the enemy’s forces could be pursued as a kind of collateral gain or, as some suggest, as a new and wider war aim.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, the most important lesson from Vietnam was supposedly that the entire strategy should be arranged to minimise the loss of (coalition) human lives — as if military commanders were not doing this anyway. A TV war showing body bags had to be avoided. As some commentators rightly point out, however, wars and “casualties” at least initially can also tend to mobilise public opinion behind its forces.<sup>80</sup>

The US-led attack followed in four steps. First, US troops were flown in, accompanied by aircrafts and some war ships to deter possible attacks against Saudi Arabia: the “minimum deterrence force”. Then, in a second phase 220 000 troops were brought in. This took three month. Then, Desert Storm started with a massive air attack aimed at providing air superiority and finally supremacy, in order to prepare the ground war.

<sup>76</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 29. Chapour Haghibat, “Les dessous de la guerre du Golfe”, p. 14, cites a Colonel Tony Gain from the Central Command for confirmation that real manoeuvres took place, called “Internal Look 90” during July 1990 in Florida.

<sup>77</sup> For such an argument, see Lothar Rühl, “Der Krieg am Golf. Militärischer Verlauf und politisch-strategische Probleme”, *Europa Archiv*, no. 8 (1991), p. 241.

<sup>78</sup> For this quote before the attack, see Geoffrey Kemp, “The Gulf Crisis: diplomacy or force?”, p. 511.

<sup>79</sup> Eugene J. Carroll, Jr and Gene R. La Rocque, “Victory in the Desert: Superior Technology or Brute Force?” in Victoria Brittain (ed.) *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), p. 45.

<sup>80</sup> This certainly happened for the Gulf conflict. See Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, “How Kuwait Was Won. Strategy in the Gulf War”, *International Security*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Fall 1991), p. 17.

The military story is undoubtedly a success story. The US tried out the emergency plans prepared in CentCom for quick deployment and those developed for the AirLand Battle at the European NATO front. It was the biggest and most complicated *logistic* operation since the beginning phase of the Korean War 1950-51. According to different sources, this included moving 1.5 to 2 billion tons of military material, ammunition and equipment; 12 000 tanks and armoured vehicles; 67-103 000 wheeled vehicles; 26 000 containers; as well as 55 million ton of mail and 117 million bottles of drinking water. To do this, the US used 40 ports, the entire air transport fleet, more than 1000 ships, and bases in America, Asia, Europe and in Egypt. They profited from (1) the existing Saudi infrastructure which has facilities for 2500 military airplanes, and (2) the NATO structures in Europe, that is airports, deposits, ports, ships, and so on. In Germany, it used 750 trains of the German merchandise train system and 1200 transports on German roads.<sup>81</sup> NATO proved a key link for the early deployment of forces and the deployment of its VII Corps from Germany was Schwarzkopf's condition for any offensive option, because they were the elite troops trained in AirLand Battle.<sup>82</sup> Once again, the end of bipolar competition in Europe made things easier for the coalition. It could use troops that otherwise would have been needed to protect the European front.

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**Table 9.4 The composition of US forces in the area (by 16 January 1991)**

*Air force:* 40.000; Fixed-wing aircraft min. 850. Total of fixed-wing aircraft from all services min. 1.680.

*Navy:* 70.000; ships 114, navy planes 530 (410 combat planes)

*Army:* Personnel 245.000 (approx. 70.000 of which came from Europe), main battle tanks 2.100.

*Marine Corps:* Personnel 100.000, Tanks 200.

Non-US coalition forces added about another 200.000 military personnel, primarily ground forces.

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It was a massive air attack with 109.876 sorties, averaging 2000 per day (all types of aircraft, including transport and fuel) and 88.500 tons of bombs. This air attack followed closely the "Airland Battle" strategy, developed for the European theatre, which consists in targeting behind the front to disorganise the defense, break the organisation of counter-attacks and the link to follow-on echelons (FoFa, "Follow-on Forces Attack"), and to demobilise psychologically. Thus, the attacks were targeting first the command, communication and intelligence capacities in the heart of Iraq, then the logistic structures that link up to the front and finally, in order to prepare the ground war, the armed forces

<sup>81</sup> If not otherwise stated, the following is taken from Lothar Rühl, "Der Krieg am Golf. Militärischer Verlauf und politisch-strategische Probleme", *Europa Archiv*, no. 8 (1991), p. 239.

<sup>82</sup> For the centrality of NATO and its troops, see U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 145-46 and Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 192.

in Kuwait. Although the attack was generally expected to come via Iraq to avoid the Iraqi defence lines<sup>83</sup>, it seems to have caught Iraqi unprepared.

By 20 February, shortly before the beginning of the attack, more than 530.000 US forces were ready. After this preparation, the land war became in effect a “walkover”.

#### 4. Conclusion: The Gulf conflict — unnecessary and inevitable<sup>84</sup>

How does this dynamic part link up with the power origins developed in the previous chapter? The logic of power, at both the regional and international level, could be constructed so as to expect an Iraqi US contest to fill the regional vacuum of power. The distribution of power would lead to a prediction of US victory under a variety of conditions: capacity to get a local base, multilateral backing, coalition financing, and so on. In a sense, the story spells out *ex post* all the conditions needed to translate the expected power potential difference into actual influence over the outcome.

By focusing on the dynamics of the war, power analysis produces the most fruitful puzzles for understanding the conflict. By giving the most rational means-ends relations, it constructs the most rational behaviour of the actors and compares them with the actual behaviour. The discrepancies are the power puzzles of the translation dynamics. They can happen at the very beginning by miscalculating either resources or will to use them (the failed deterrence scenario). Here interests and preferences are integrated into power analysis because they qualify the will to resort to all the power resources. Later, discrepancies can appear when pre-established strategies fail or are poorly implemented. Thus, at this point, a strategic discussion would normally have shown all the different interactions and judgments that brought about the Kuwaiti invasion, Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This will be done in Part V, in chapter 14, when the disposition of the Realist paradigm to produce research puzzles and over-rationalisation is analysed as an incident of governance.

But to give the judgment in advance; it seems that the conflict started *unnecessarily* because one could have avoided weapon proliferation, deterred Iraqi intervention and pushed Gulf states to pursue more enlightened policy. The Iraqi miscalculation of taking all Kuwait without expecting massive US response, and the Kuwaiti miscalculation of escalating the oil price conflict without expecting Iraqi annexation, can, in this rationalist power analysis, only be understood via the ambiguous signals given by the US administration. It seems that the administration did not want to get involved and hoped for a limited conflict which would be resolved regionally. A mixture of strong

<sup>83</sup> For examples of a concise analysis that predicted the land war strategy, see Jacques Isnard, “Comme dans les manuels”, *Le Monde*, 17-18 février 1991, pp. 1, 3; and Christoph Bertram, “Statt Schlichtung nun die Schlacht?”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 9 (22-28 February 1991), pp. 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> Christoph Bertram, “Ein Krieg ohne Beispiel. Der Waffengang um Kuwait was unnötig und unvermeidlich”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 10 (1-7 March 1991), p. 3.



commitment to defend Kuwait and an attempt to address the financing of Iraqi's debt might have prevented the invasion.<sup>85</sup>

If one translates this conflict in game-theoretical terms, the game matrix for both Iraq and Kuwait before the invasion must have been one where both considered escalation as being in their interest. Normally these things happen when the power differential is not very large and miscalculations most probable. Yet in this case it is exactly the different anticipation of power differentials (with or without the US) that in fact provided a form of a twofold game which cannot be put into one single matrix.

Once the US took over the Kuwaiti part, its matrix was one where peaceful conflict resolution had to be avoided, whereas Iraq got trapped in a no-win situation: either humiliation or war. From this point war appears nearly *inevitable*. The game must therefore be considered as a variant of the "Rambo-game" type: the US could make its best result by avoiding compromise (Rambo), whereas Iraq had to give in, i.e. accept war and its defeat, in order to avoid humiliation and domestic unrest.<sup>86</sup> In this respect, the US set the stage for making war inevitable, but would not have succeeded without the domestic constraints on the Iraqi government.

The escalation could not have been done without the consent of the coalition for which an international support and legitimation was needed. Thus, despite all claims to the contrary, the policy mix of a needed multilateralisation and a needed escalation, let the Bush administration follow a typical gradualist timetable<sup>87</sup>: it started with a UNSC verbal condemnation, then the economic embargo, then the naval blockade, air blockade, finally the threat of direct military action, followed by the attack. Even the US military operations proceeded in different stages leaving the ground war to the very end. At all stages, negotiation offers were presented to allow the interruption of the escalation.

Security analysis does not stop here. It is important to know the long-term effects of this outcome. Common political wisdom has it, that one can win a war and lose the peace. In power terms this refers in particular to *indirect power*, that is, the attempt to frame an outcome, not as an end, but as a means to change the regimes within which future conflicts will be played out. The translation dynamics have a long-term effect on the power structure to frame, preempt, or set the agenda for future conflicts. In the Gulf, the US fought Second World War to win Vietnam. Or: In the post-Cold War world, it wanted to preempt power challengers North and South to deflect domestic restructuring. What has the war changed in world power politics?

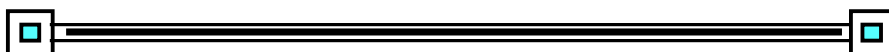
<sup>85</sup> Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf", p. 159. She then argues that the US was actually unable to make a credible deterrent threat.

<sup>86</sup> For a presentation of the Rambo-game in IR, see Michael Zürn, *Interessen und Institutionen in der internationalen Politik*, pp. 209ff.

<sup>87</sup> For this paragraph, see Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh, "How Kuwait was won", p. 40.

# 10

## “War and Change” in the Middle Eastern Security Complex



Wars that end with such a crushing victory are the fathers of all new equilibria. They reflect a power shift that happened before the conflict, that sought to realise itself during the conflict and provided the “defining moment” (Baker) for the “new world order”.

This chapter will assess the feedback of the conflict’s outcome on the crucial points of the Neorealist power analysis (see Figure 10.1):

- (1) on the most abstract level: the historically contingent fields of security. The question to be tackled is, if the conflict has opened new or made visible the importance of already existing security sectors. This influences the respective sets of potential power resources.
- (2) on the level of historically contingent power resources. The feedback dynamic part of Neorealist power analysis must evaluate if the conflict has shown or provided a reassessment of the value of power resources, for instance, if there has been an unknown resource that proved important or a traditionally respected power resource that has proven useless.
- (3) on the level of the security complex. Once the future power resources provide the primary material for the assessment of the balance of power, the conflict-outcome will be judged on its impact on the entire security complex. For our case, this implies the impact on the international and regional balances of power, their interpenetration, the security policies of the major powers, and the rules which govern the different regimes. It is on this level, that the Neorealist concept of *indirect* power can be located. It can be defined as the attempt of an actor to influence the future security structure via the feedback of the outcome. Foreign policy moves can be seen as part of wider long-term strategies.

### 1. A new kind of war for a new kind of security?

The first feedback dynamic concentrates on the reassessment of resources or policy instruments and their relationship to potential power. Theoretically, the analysis of a conflict can point to formerly neglected or even unknown issue areas or regimes (or

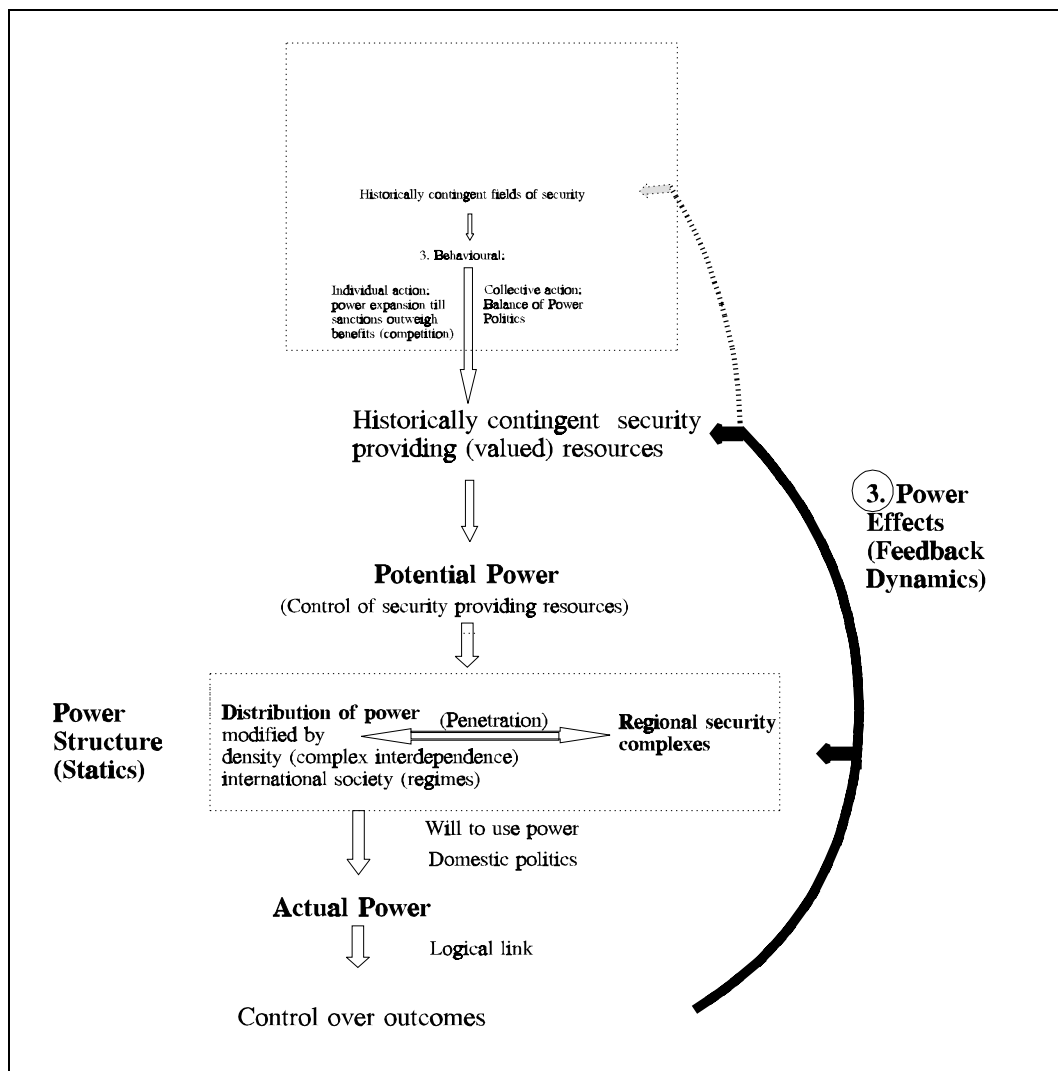


Figure 10.1 Power effects

security sectors) that are defined around resources whose control has become significant in the distribution of power. This happened, for instance, to the environmental sector. But these feedbacks are rare and major historical changes might take so much time as not to be linkable to one particular event. Feedback analysis also shows how specific resources in already existing regimes have acquired a new importance. This can be shown for two resources and instruments in the conflict, namely water and space-transmitted and space-collected information.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, strictly speaking, these first two issues could be already mentioned during the initial stage of the analysis. The decision to leave them here is the fact that they were less widely perceived as major

### 1.1. Future Middle Eastern “Water wars” ?

During the Gulf conflict, helpless cormorants in a horror movie of oily sea waves brought one often forgotten security item, namely the environment, to the forefront of international attention. Analytically, environmental security is not an easily approached subject. Buzan has attempted a definition: “environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend”. This leaves some questions unanswered. The difficulty consists in knowing *whose* security we are talking about. Generally, one could reasonably see the state level as the security-relevant unit.<sup>2</sup> But for the environment, at least as it is expressed in the definition, the reference seems to be global, both supranational, because the environment does not stop at borders, and individual, because it is a basis for all other “human enterprises.”

In general, the state reference is kept. Environmental security becomes, then, a hybrid between economic and military security. It is similar to economic security, because very often the control of, for instance, water, can be considered like a natural resource.<sup>3</sup> It can be done via territorial control of the exploitation sites or via the control of its distribution (cartelised markets). It is similar to military security, because “drying out” the enemy hurts and kills the individual and not the community as such.

Water is the one environmental resource in the Middle Eastern security complex that, for some commentators, will be a possible trigger for major future conflicts. “Water security will soon rank with military security in the war rooms of defense ministries.”<sup>4</sup> We are entering a century where security will also mean “hydrostrategics.”<sup>5</sup>

To say that water was no reason for this conflict, does not mean that the water-issue has not triggered armed conflicts in the past. The most disputed area is the Upper part of the Jordan, or in other words, the water divide between Syria, Jordan and Israel. Most recently, the Jordan Wahda (unity) Dam project has been torpedoed by Israelis, because they want a part of it.

This is an old dispute. Following a US-sponsored decision from 1955, Jordan is allowed to take 377 million m<sup>3</sup> of the Yarmuk for its East-Ghor Channel (a channel which takes water from the Yarmuk and carries it in parallel to the Jordan for irrigation), Syria 90 million m<sup>3</sup>, and Israel (at the time only for 10 km riverain of the Yarmuk) 25 million m<sup>3</sup>. Yet neither Israel nor Syria follows this so called “Johnston-Plan”, never signed, but

power instruments for such a war, i.e. that the awareness was raised during the conflict. Suffice it to mention that the water issue has known a particular success after the war, not only because it became one of the working groups of the Middle East (Madrid) Conference.

<sup>2</sup> See also Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*.

<sup>3</sup> Peter H. Gleick, “Water and Conflict: Fresh Water Resources and International Security”, *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Summer 1993), p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> Joyce R. Starr, “Water Wars”, *Foreign Policy*, no. 82 (Spring 1991), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Reiner Luyken, “Wasser ist Frieden. Kein Wasser ist Krieg”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 52 (20-26 December 1991), p. 13.

always referred to as the only authoritative source. Israel pumps 30% of its water supply via the “water-carrier” out of the Sea of Galilee. The same water-carrier takes 500 million m<sup>3</sup> of Jordan water, instead of the 375 fixed by the Johnston Plan. It pumps the Jordan back into the See of Galilee (Tiberia).

The Arabs tried in 1964 to channel the Lebanese Hasbani and the Syrian Baniyas (two of the Jordan sources) around the Golan into the Yarmuk and to dam it before it reaches Israel.<sup>6</sup> Repeatedly in 1966 and 1967, Israel bombarded vehicles, roads and the construction site. With the war from 1967, it got hold of the Baniyas, and controls half the Yarmuk. Since then Israel also controls the Northern entrance of the East-Ghor Channel. On 23 June and the 10 August 1969, Israel destroyed a great part of the Channel and avoided its maintenance at the entrance till 1976. Today, between Hamar Gadar on the Yarmuk and its mouth, Israel has three water pumps, one for the grapefruit and bananas plantations and two for the See of Galilee — depleted by its own water carrier. Yet, Israel is using a highly inefficient irrigation system (sprinkling), unlike Jordan which needs only half the water (drip irrigation). Also Syria pumps out of the higher part of the Yarmuk. For these reasons, Jordan and Syria have developed a plan to construct a new dam on the Yarmuk, the “dam of unity”. Jordan pays for the dam, gets 75% of the water, and Syria 75% of the electric power. They offered Israel the share provided by the Johnson Plan. Israel refused and succeeded in stopping the World Bank financing which would help Jordan to build the dam.<sup>7</sup> The loser in the game is Jordan.

The biggest problem appears with the entrance of a new sovereign state, Palestine. The West Bank has become crucial for the entire water equilibrium of Israel. Around 33% of Israel’s total sustainable annual water yields originates in the territories occupied in the 1967 war.<sup>8</sup> In a massively discriminating distribution of water, Israel does not permit Arab Palestinians to drill new wells or deepen the existing ones for agricultural purpose, and has restricted the annual consumption for West Bank Arabs to 125 mcm/year. Whereas Israel has drilled 36 new wells and subsidises water for its settlers (and not for Arabs), Arab farmers cannot use more water than the fixed rate from 1967. By 2000, the per capita water allocation is expected to be in the proportion 10 (Israeli) to 1 (Arab).<sup>9</sup> Arab farmers increasingly give up or their territory is nationalised, as foreseen by Israeli Occupation Law, when farming land lays dry for two years.<sup>10</sup> More and more observers see the water issue as the most difficult issue (beside East Jerusalem) for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

<sup>6</sup> For the following account, see Reiner Luyken, “Wasser ist Frieden. Kein Wasser ist Krieg”, pp. 13-15.

<sup>7</sup> Arnold Hottinger, “Wasser als Konfliktstoff. Eine Existenzfrage für Staaten im Nahen Osten”, *Europa Archiv*, vol. 47, no. 6 (March 1992), p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> Peter H. Gleick, “Water and Conflict”, pp. 85-86.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam R. Lowi, “Bridging the Divide: Transboundary Resource Disputes and the Case of West Bank Water”, *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Summer 1993), p. 126ff.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Hottinger, “Wasser als Konfliktstoff”, p. 163, n. 5.

Water also links the Near East also to the Gulf. Saudi Arabia is pumping out of a 10000 years old “Disi-aquifer” (stretching, beneath the desert, from Saudi Arabia till Jordan), becoming the world’s sixth greatest wheat exporter (production of wheat from 17 505 tons to 4 million tons in 1991).<sup>11</sup> Every ton of wheat has absorbed 2000 litres of fossil, i.e. non-renewable water. Thus, one could also calculate the export of wheat as an export of water which would be 8 million m<sup>3</sup>/year. Saudi Arabia wastes enormous amounts of water in producing food, which could be imported at more cheaply. Now Jordan has also started pumping out of this aquifer.

In short, this dependence on water of the Gulf states’ and of Israel’s agriculture is an obvious security concern. “Indeed, every one of the Gulf states is strategically vulnerable to full attack or sabotage on their desalting capacity.”<sup>12</sup> Till now it was more perceived as an incidence of sensitivity interdependence than of vulnerability. This vulnerability has been made visible to the wider public by the oil spilling in the Gulf, which was threatening the desalination site on which Saudi Arabian agriculture depended. The conflict showed quite insufficient *Standard Operating Procedures* with regard to defending oil and water plants: the US government was barely equipped to defend Saudi water facilities. The security measures are comparable to those used for postal and telephone systems.<sup>13</sup>

The interesting security factor in the region is that the US allies in the region, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel are all vulnerable as a result of their water-dependence. The future solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem, in particular, seems to be possibly hampered by water. Israel has no real water reserves. An important water source, the Yarkon/Taninim aquifer lies beneath both the Israeli and the occupied territories. The control of Jordan water depends very much on Israeli control of the West Bank and the Golan (and Southern Lebanon), i.e. the occupied territories. Finally, the Gaza strip’s water will be unusable by the year 2000 when its population reaches 1 million — and the strip might have reached full independence.

On the other hand, another US ally in the Middle East possesses the largest water reserves in the region. Turkey’s *Güney Anadolu Projesi* (GAP) consisted in trying to develop South-East Turkey through, among others, agricultural projects irrigated by a massive dam system in particular on the Upper Euphrat. This project had heightened tensions with both Iraq and Syria. Till now, it seems that Turkey handled water relatively fairly — but the dam-system provides her with the control of the water’s flow. Two other South-Eastern rivers are now planned to provide water to other countries in the region. Turkey plans a water-pipeline system with one to Jordan and Syria, the other to the states of the CGG. Turkish companies eventually have been approached, somewhat reluctantly, by the Israeli Water Commission about export of water. One commentator notes, that the US tries to broker the deal. A \$US 20 billion US aid to finance Turkish water for Israel

<sup>11</sup> For the following account, see Reiner Luyken, “Wasser ist Frieden. Kein Wasser ist Krieg”, pp. 13-15.

<sup>12</sup> Joyce R. Starr, “Water Wars”, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Joyce R. Starr, “Water Wars”, p. 20.

was discussed during the Baker trip immediately following the end of the Gulf Conflict.<sup>14</sup> Since then, there have been no news.

Thus, Neorealist power analysis does not show that a historically new field of security has emerged. Environmental security is already an established field where interdependencies imply the control of important and relationally valued resources. Yet, it shows a feedback to one specific resource, water, whose importance for the future of the stability of the security complex is crucial because it is on the very “frontline” between Israel and Palestine. But also in the Gulf, its control was underestimated before the conflict, thus the insufficient *Standard Operating Procedures*. The Gulf conflict has increased water’s strategic importance. It remains to see whether water interdependencies have possibly gained an independent dynamic underlying the security complex that might not only feed, but, in fact, originate future crisis and conflicts therein.

### 1.2. A war of space intelligence and communication

Wars not only reassess the relative importance of possibly prior neglected power instruments, but are always test cases for existing ones. In a relational understanding of power, there is no power instrument whose exact efficacy can be assessed outside of its exercise.

The Gulf conflict is often presented as a commercial for US “high-tech” weaponry. Especially the laser-guided “smart” bombs, on which cameras had been fixed, provided “wonderful” pictures on accuracy attacks that make traditional defence look stone-aged, including such shelters as the Amariya one whose mistaken destruction caused many civil deaths and public outcry. True, the Patriot ground-air defence missiles often proved inefficient against Iraqi Scuds, because they deflected rather than destroyed them. Yet they provided a first usable weapon which will proliferate in close parallel to offensive missiles in the region and elsewhere. Tomahawk Cruise Missiles could be used before at least some of them would be destroyed under START. Again, they proved very important in the strategy of attacking the C<sup>3</sup>I, for which they were also originally planned on the European theatre. Sometimes their accuracy was diminished by flak artillery which deflected them, as for instance in the famous “scoop” when it touched a Baghdad hotel where foreign journalists were accommodated. The F-117A, so-called stealth fighters, were important in delivering some of the important smart bombs although their use was limited to avoid possible losses (laser also makes stealth visible).

These weapons impressed and demoralised the Iraqi army, and kept Israel from counteracting Scud attacks. The high-tech image gave the US the credibility to “run” attacks and defences that were in fact outside its reach, if one considers that only a small part of the bombing was done with “intelligent” weapons. The proliferation of missiles and anti-missiles might impede the material edge of the US, but the accuracy of its weapons remains unchallenged.

<sup>14</sup> Abbas Shibliak, “The deepening tragedy of the Palestinians”, in Victoria Brittain (ed.), *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), p. 130.

Even more unchallenged is another part of the US weaponry, which turned out to be the most important: space communication and control. US supremacy in the future will depend on to what extent it can keep this advantageous control. As usual, wars that show the efficacy of a power instrument make it known, thus more vulnerable in the next contest. It can be expected that the control the space will become a major issue, and not for the SDI as was initially thought.

For some commentators, it was the first space war, because heavily dependent on the wide array of orbiting satellites.<sup>15</sup> The war was far away from Washington, but satellites made on-line communication possible between Saudi Arabia and the US, and on the different fronts within the conflict area. The same satellites proved important for intelligence, that is in particular for early warnings on enemy movements and for the direction and activation of Patriots. As long as the efficacy of Patriots depends on specific military satellites, the US can still export the missiles if it controls the satellite proliferation. The satellites provided precise navigation data in the shapeless desert, the important weather forecasting for the sorties and the exact terrain mapping for the flight paths of the Tomahawks.

The importance of independent intelligence has been revealed by the photos that may have convinced Saudi Arabia to reverse its policy and to align officially with the US. At that initial stage, there was no independent control possible. This monopoly of quick intelligence has been replayed again in the Gulf, when President Bush ordered an attack on Iraqi missile sites that were allegedly beyond the coalition's accepted line in January 1993, just before leaving the White House. Since this had some domestic rationales (*fait accompli* for the military budget of the new administration), the accuracy of the official justification was doubted. The international community had, however, no way to check if Iraq was indeed faulty on the issue. It is to be expected that both some corners of the UN and some other countries will push for relieving the US of the burden of their quasi-monopoly. The Europeans will get an intelligence satellite *Helios* in 1993.<sup>16</sup> Russia could make their intelligence more widely available. Private US or international media firms might come out with military intelligence.

The amplified importance of on-line communication and diffusion does, of course, not stop here. The Gulf war was the first on-line "reality-show" in the history of war, controlled by US satellite news firms and strengthened by the pool-system that excluded foreigners. As usual, the efficient use of power instruments and the awareness of their importance makes them more critical for future use. Thus, the Gulf conflict has made public opinion more sensitive to the power inherent in the information regime, as for instance, about the "americanization" of its discourse. This can be seen in the mocking

<sup>15</sup> For the following, see Eugene Carroll, Jr & Gene La Rocque, "Victory in the Desert", pp. 43-46.

<sup>16</sup> François Heisbourg, "Quelles leçons stratégiques?", *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 419.



reaction to the US landing, and its coverage, in Somalia on 9 December 1992<sup>17</sup>, where Marine Corps landed during the night like in a full-fledged war. Since the landing was widely advertised beforehand, on the beach there were more journalists than Somalis and, of course, no local troops. The spotlights needed to report live from the beach were so strong as to blind the US soldiers. The discrepancy between the energy invested and the news content was blatant; so was the ambiguous role of the media.

## 2. Installing a balance of wealth and legitimacy?

The assessment of the feedback power dynamics on the regional security structure concentrates on different aspects. There is the regional distribution of power resources, in particular military, financial, and political (legitimacy or national cohesion). Then, the interpenetration of the regional and the central distribution of power will be reassessed, as for instance questions of a shifting autonomy of the region or of new regimes within which both levels “inter-depend”.

The Neorealist story emphasises the question of the future “stability” of the region, by which is meant both the recurrence of conflicts as such, and their non-violent resolution. The war is generally judged as a stage of the construction of a more “balanced” and therefore peaceful region. The focus on stability is a product of the Realist focus on “equilibria” and “balances” which are considered to be the most stable environments possible, and thus the best we can do to avoid war. It is, however, also the result of a US (and generally Western) prism through which the region is apprehended. No war means in particular no violent military involvement of the military arbiter, the US, in the region. A stable region is the most “economic” power management for an outside hegemon.

Yet, stability is not only to be achieved by military deterrence, as important as this instrument is in Realist discourse. Security analysis integrates other features needed to achieve relations of mutual security, which, in turn, lay the fundament of a more stable order.<sup>18</sup> In that respect, this section reflects exactly the section on the origins of the conflict to be found in a mix of different imbalances in different sectors. It has to be so. The feedback dynamic part of the Neorealist analysis must add an annual ring to the regional tree of history, a new layer to the sediments of prior equilibria. In this micro-macro link, indirect power analysis has its place whenever an actor does not look at the outcome as an aim as such, but as a means to rework the systemic environment within which future actions will take place.

Therefore, this chapter is organised around sections that will take up the different security areas (or policy-contingency frameworks) and analyse changes in the inter-

<sup>17</sup> Marc Ferro, “Médias et intelligence du monde”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 466 (janvier 1993), p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> For stability based on a wide-spanned conception of a regional security system, see George Joffe, “Middle Eastern View of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath”, pp. 197f.

penetration with the central balance therein. A last section will concentrate on the Gulf conflict's effect on the Northern balance independent of the region.

The decisions not to start with military security as one would expect of a Realist analysis, lies in the fact that this Neorealist-Neoinstitutionalist version of relational power analysis has come up with an explanation of the triggers of the conflict to lie in financial disequilibria and political illegitimacies of the system, i.e. in the economic and political security sectors. The feedback should show how this problem has been affected by the conflict and its outcome. This seems to have been the major policy message. After the conflict, on 6 March 1991, the US administration gave four indication for future stability in the Gulf: a security system, arms control, political and economic restructuring, and the Arab-Israeli question. Yet, after an initial concern for the political and economic rationale, which was quickly downplayed, the security focus shifted eventually to the military sector. Thus, the exposition follows the logical and historical order.

### 2.1. Political Order in Changing Security Structures

Future stability in the region, so the general argument goes, is dependent on both an economic restructuring and more political participation. A hegemon that imposes order through classical military means is not enough. The order must be sustained in the region.<sup>19</sup> Implicitly, this uses ideas from the literature on political development and modernisation. The best known is perhaps still Huntington's gap-theory, where domestic order in societies in times of greater societal mobilisation must rely on a wider representation. This can be done in the social, economic and/or political sphere, the most stable being those able to combine them, because this allows them internal flexibility. Presupposing change, survival depends on adaptation capacity.

The financial effect of the conflict on the vulnerability interdependence in the region seems not to presage future stability. The cost of the war was. Saudi Arabia's war effort was \$US 54 billion, for some commentators even \$US 65 billion.<sup>20</sup> \$US 4.4 billion of foreign deposits have left Saudi Arabia. The cost of repatriation and the Saudi emigration from the North-East is estimated at \$US 3 billion. They bought weapons for \$US 13 billion from the US in 1990, and another 17 were scheduled for 1991. Direct aid of around \$US 1.5 billion has been given to Egypt (another \$US 6.6 billion for a debt relief), \$US 1 billion to Syria, \$US 3-4 billion to help the countries affected by the embargo (Jordan, Turkey, Egypt). It needs to repatriate some of its foreign assets (estimated between \$US 40 to 70 billion). Kuwait, the other rich country, needs \$US 30-40 billion for the reconstruction of their oil production, and paid 0.5 billion/month for the exile Kuwaitis during the occupation. Kuwait seems, after first estimations, to have lost 10% of its oil reserves. There is an estimated loss of \$US 9 billion/year for the oil production

<sup>19</sup> George Joffe, "Middle Eastern View of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath", p. 198.

<sup>20</sup> For this and the following figures, see Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe: nuages après la tempête", *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 460.

at least in 1991. Not only the oil wells, but all the integrated downstream industries are touched: refinery and distribution. Kuwait had to import 180 000 barrels/day from Saudi Arabia for its oil industries and also chemical products to fuel its chemical industries relying on gas.<sup>21</sup> Kuwait has become rather more dependent on Saudi Arabia.

This rejoins a long-term dynamic which has undermined regional autonomy in the last decade. Oil money was fuelling this autonomy; the disastrous crash of oil prices which at times pushed it in real terms under the level of 1973 *before* the price raise has accordingly diminished this autonomy and redistributed resources more generally to the non-oil producing world, the North included. The financial losses of the Gulf region in oil revenues (OAPEC): from \$US 217.15 billion in 1980 (absolute high) to \$US 55.8 billion in 1986 to estimated \$US 98 billion in 1992. The last increase is due to a larger share in the world oil market and not to the higher prices during the first months of the crisis. Middle Eastern oil is expected to cover 50% of oil exports in 2000. The damages of the two wars are estimated at comprehensively \$US 800 billion, \$US 350 billion for the first, the rest for the last one.<sup>22</sup>

The low oil price level was one of the triggers of the conflict. Again, the dynamic does not seem to reverse the basic problem. A coordinated oil price policy as decided in July 1990 before the Gulf war, was given up during the conflict on 29 August under massive pressure from the US.<sup>23</sup> After the OPEC meeting in March 1991, during which Saudi Arabia fiercely resisted cutting the OPEC production by 2 million barrels a day, 1.3 million of which would be Saudi oil. Saudi Arabia refused until January 1992 an extraordinary meeting of the OPEC. The Saudis' official position is that new restriction on the production could be made, but with a shrinking percentage for *all* producers. Yet, Saudi Arabia as the swing-producer exceeded its production by 60% (compared to the July 1990 system) to take the Kuwaiti and Iraqi part. The majority of OPEC countries, on the other hand, want to come back to the last agreement (Ecuador, Algeria, Gabun, Libya, Indonesia, Nigerian and Iran).<sup>24</sup> Yet, as long as the Saudi resist, there will be no price and quantity control. Thus, countries compete for new oil concessions, where the vain hope for higher prices is given up. Even Iran is aligning itself to the "moderate" policy of higher output and contracts, like the one with TOTAL which resembles yesterday's concessions very much.<sup>25</sup>

The consequences of this development are the following. Kuwaiti dependence on Saudi Arabia means that Saudi decisions will play an even major role in the Gulf balance. Furthermore, it seems that declining oil incomes and high reconstruction costs predispose Gulf states to be more avaricious with their money. It also seems that the new generation

<sup>21</sup> Véronique Maurus, "Au Koweït, l'industrie pétrolière est dévastée", *Le Monde*, 15 mars 1991, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Nikolas Sarkis, "L'inquiétante baisse des revenus du pétrole", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), p. 6. These last figures are obviously tentative.

<sup>23</sup> Abbas Alnawrawi, "Iraq: economic consequences of the 1991 Gulf War and future outlook", p. 344.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Söhler, "Spätfolgen des Golfkrieges", *Die Zeit*, vol. 47, no. 9 (21-27 February 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", p. 5.

of Saudi leadership argues for less financial intervention in regional affairs, because petrodollars have been unable to guarantee external security.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the whole region has been financially weakened, with the exception of Egypt. With \$US 13.6 billion cancelled debt, Egypt seems at first sight to be the regional winner. The balance sheet is, however, more complicated. The war nearly destroyed the second most important sector for foreign currency, tourism. From June 1989 to June 1990, it brought \$US 2.5 billion in income. There was hardly any tourist from June 1990 until the end of 1991. 700.000 people are officially reported to work in the tourism sector.<sup>27</sup> Another problem is the return of around 1 million guestworkers from the Gulf states, both for their economic and social integration and for the foreign exchange losses of their remittances, estimated at around \$US 1 billion/year.<sup>28</sup> Finally, the embargo has much diminished the income from the Suez channel. Egyptian officials have estimated the total loss of foreign exchange for 1990 alone at \$US 3 billion.<sup>29</sup> The attempts to use acquired leverage via the World Bank or the new constituted regional fund for development have been disappointing. Egypt hoped many reconstruction contracts would be won by Egyptian firms that possibly employ also Egyptian workforce in the Gulf. At least for the immediate reconstruction, they have been disappointed.<sup>30</sup>

All this shows, that if financial redistribution is needed for political stability, then the conflict has reduced the room for manoeuvre. But there is seemingly a new structure for regional development. Baker's idea of a regional Fund for Development financed by Gulf states for a better distribution of wealth has eventually been taken up albeit not as initially thought. As an outside country, the US perceives the Middle East as basically one "problem" to be solved by one structure. Yet, the coalition of the war has been the Swan song of Arab unity. Baker's idea would presuppose a common Gulf structure, but Saudi Arabia is less and less willing to risk its resources for it. Thus, the creation of an *Arab Fund for Development* is not a real multilateral organisation, but in fact a system of bilateral aid, where the countries of the GCC give money to those that have been on the coalition side during the war: Syria, Morocco, and above all Egypt which could be released from its whole foreign debt (\$US 31 billion). Excluded are Yemen, Tunisia, Libya and the PLO. Money will also be given to the private sector, and not the public, thereby imitating the strategy less of the World Bank, than of the EBRD. The initial

<sup>26</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", pp. 4ff., 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> Alexandre Bucciante & Yves Heller, "Les dividendes du conflit en Egypte", *Le Monde*, 27 février 1991.

<sup>28</sup> Such losses are not limited to the Middle East, but link up to other regions. India, for instance, has to integrate 170 000 Indians back from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and accommodate for a diminished export in the region. See for this point, Gilbert Etienne, "Craquements en Asie du Sud. La mutation de l'Inde et du Pakistan est rendue encore plus difficile par la crise du Golfe", *Le Monde*, 22 janvier 1991.

<sup>29</sup> Bassam Tibi, "Die irakische Kuwait-Invasion und die Golfkrise", p. 19. The amount might have been intentionally overstated.

<sup>30</sup> Volker Perthes, "Abhängigkeiten und Entwicklungschancen der arabischen Welt", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 30-31 (19 July 1991), p. 19.

capital of \$US 15-18 billion is coming from the countries of the GCC.<sup>31</sup> If financial disequilibrium was one of the triggers of the conflicts, the region has not been stabilised.

## 2.2. The prospects for democracy

The question of democracy enters Neorealist power analysis only to the extent that democratic systems are presupposed to be more stable. Higher stability does not imply a reduction of conflicts, but a higher probability not to resort to war to resolve them. Existing democratic regimes are stabilising, because (1) their governments are said to behave more responsibly (the guarantee against psychopaths) and (2) their social systems integrate and respond to popular demands (the guarantee against “mob”-induced expansionism). On the other hand, the *change* to democracy can produce setbacks, both if it is achieved by means of evolution or revolution. Realists in general (and US policy in particular) have been aware of this problem and often preferred authoritarian regimes, which are enlightened enough to make “reasonable” policies so as to preempt popular discontent, and are aligned with the US.

Thus, it is in the context of political security that democracy enters into Neorealist analysis. An unstable system is a threat, not because of its power, but because of its “weakness”.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the power analysis part of Neorealism is limited in this context. I shall confine myself to a short sketch of the Gulf conflict’s impact on the stability of domestic systems.

The Second Gulf War has given a time-span to resolve some origins of the conflict: domestic political instability, the inequality between Arab nations, and the ideological competition between modernising regimes and so-called feudal Gulf states. With today’s hindsight, the US has lost the momentum and indulged in short-term stabilising policies. It looks like a transfer of the sphere-of-influence policy, as applied today in Latin America, to US Middle East policies.

First a look to those countries that had engaged in a moderate opening to some more pluralism: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen. A few months after the end of the conflict, commentators were already pointing to the fact that in three of these countries Islamic fundamentalism will be the winner of the post-war<sup>33</sup>, as it happened most prominently in the Algerian June 1991 elections, followed by a coup. Yemen might be less touched by it. But its neighbour Saudi Arabia, strengthened through the war, does not see with a candid eye either Yemenite unification nor steps to democratisation. The aid embargo and slow border negotiations are an indication of mounting Saudi pressure.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Véronique Maurus, “Six pétromonarchies du Golfe envisagent de créer un Fonds arabe de développement”, *Le Monde*, 30 mars 1991.

<sup>32</sup> Buzan’s distinction.

<sup>33</sup> Michael C. Hudson, “After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 427-40.

<sup>34</sup> Addendum: Saudi Arabia has been playing an important role in the recent civil war in Yemen which in fact split up the country again.

For the other countries, there has been no indication that democratisation, or more precisely any move that would counteract the factors originating the conflict, will follow. In the Gulf, *Kuwait's Emir*, although having promised a move to reestablish the constitution and to open the consultative parliament, became famous for allowing a witch-hunting of Palestinians considered collaborators of Saddam Hussein. Robert Fisk quotes US officials as having found out that the Emir had planned the expulsion of 200.000 Palestinians, and that members of the Emir's family were part of the death squads that more or less arbitrarily murdered Palestinians after the "liberation".<sup>35</sup> The population has been reduced from 2.2 million to 1.2 million people. None of the non-Kuwaiti minorities should represent more than 10% of the population.<sup>36</sup> In the parliamentary elections that were finally held on 5 October 1992, political parties were forbidden. Only 1/7 of the 600000 Kuwaiti citizens were voters. Understandably, the new Parliamentarians usually coming from the rich merchant families are not particularly eager to allow greater participation.<sup>37</sup> In Saudi Arabia, on March 1992, *King Fahd* announced the creation of a Consulting Council of 60 persons. Free elections are excluded. If anything, the Gulf conflict has worsened the prospects for more participation.

### 3. A new regional balance of power

The feedback on the regional security structure is characterised by a disaggregation of the aggressor of the war, of the Arab world in general, and by a renewed but changed impact of the central balance on the regional one. It creates an in-between situation between mere US "penetration" in the Gulf and a unilateral "overlay".

[Overlay] is quite distinct from the normal process of intervention by great powers into the affairs of local security complexes. Intervention usually reinforces the local security dynamics: overlay subordinates them to the larger pattern of major power rivalries, and may even obliterate them (...) To be feasible, overlay requires either or both of a massive, locally applicable, military superiority by the external power(s), and a strong will on the part of the local states to invite a large and sustained external presence. It also requires a strong enough interest on the part of the external power(s) to justify the costs of extended presence ... such conditions are difficult, if not impossible, to find in the contemporary world. The Americans discovered the cost of attempting overlay against the grain of local conditions in Vietnam.<sup>38</sup>

Maybe overcoming the Vietnam-Syndrome meant a new form of relations between the central and regional security systems, a crucial link in the "new world order".

<sup>35</sup> Robert Fisk, "Kuwait's royal torturers", *The Independent*, 27 April 1991, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Schwelien, "Kuwait ist frei. Danke Amerika!", *Die Zeit*, vol. 47, no. 33 (7-13 August 1992), p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Gilles Kraemer, "Deux ans après, la démocratie reste balbutiante au Kuwait", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), pp. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, pp. 190, 220-21.

### 3.1. The institutionalisation of Iraqi political insecurity

Half of the Republican Guard had been stationed in the North (at the Turkish border and for the defence of Baghdad) and another part was able to escape from the US attack which stopped short before encircling them. Only a few days after the cease-fire on 27 February, in the Southern regions, Shi'ites rebelled against Saddam Hussein. They attacked the local representatives of the Iraqi power in the cities, displaced them and declared independence of the cities for central rule. At the beginning of March, the Kurdish minority rose against the Iraqi government. For the first time it started from the cities (Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, Arbil, Dohuk) which are more difficult to defend against government troops than the mountains. The Kurdish Peshmerga came to help them. The remaining Iraqi troops were surrendering nearly without fight. In the meanwhile, the two major Iraqi Kurdish groups, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan under Jalal *Talabani* and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Masud *Barzani* had formed a united Kurdish Front together with other groups.

The uprising was encouraged by the US administration. President Bush himself called on the Iraqi population at two moments on 15 February 1991 and on 1 March (i.e. after the ground war) to use the momentum to get rid of Saddam Hussein. The US shot down two Iraqi airplanes on 20 and 22 March and alluded that the US would interfere with Iraqi airforce and helicopters to protect the Kurdish uprising.<sup>39</sup>

Shi'ite groups declared their aim to establish an Islamic Republic in the South. At this point, the Iranian government abandoned its policy of neutrality and shouldered the uprising by sending Iraqi Shi'ites that had escaped to Iran during the first Gulf War and trained militarily since. Concomitantly, Saudi Arabia pressured an already shaken US government to allow for either a military coup or to leave Saddam Hussein in power. Also the CIA seems to have come to the conclusion that it would be best for the future US power in the region to keep a weakened and blackmailable Saddam Hussein than anyone else. The US decided not to help the uprising in order to leave the Iraqi political system in political insecurity whose exploitation should be reserved to the US-led coalition.

The US legitimated its U-turn officially with the shaky argument that it had no UN mandate for intervening in domestic Iraqi affairs, and domestically by alluding to the morass of civil war, talking about "Lebanisation", mobilising another Vietnam myth of a "quagmire"— "a situation in which a country with a high stake in the satisfactory resolution of a conflict suffers steady losses without making evident progress."<sup>40</sup> Probably such a direct military action would not have been necessary. A report written by the US Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs on 2 May 1991, related that Iraqi officers had approached the Iraqi opposition at the beginning of March offering forces to help the uprising — if they were assured of US backing. Since this was not forthcoming, they

<sup>39</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "Die arabische Welt nach dem Golf-Krieg", *Europa-Archiv*, no. 15-16 (1991), p. 439, 446-47.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "Escalators and quagmires: expectations and the use of force", *International Affairs* (London), vol. 67, no. 1 (1991), p. 26.

cancelled their offer.<sup>41</sup> Once the Guard was left with no choice but to follow Saddam Hussein, he ordered such brutal massacres that they had to assure his victory in order to avoid revenge. Having “pacified” the South, the Kurdish uprising was tackled, the occupied cities reconquered.

As to the fleeing 2 million Kurds that reached the Turkish and Iranian border, the US was forced to act by (1) a French initiative, the UNSC resolution 688 imposing on the Iraqi government to respect of Human Rights, to accept humanitarian missions and UN observers, (2) an idea by the Turkish President Turgut Özal taken up and propagated by UK Prime Minister John Major to install security zones in Iraq. First, aid started to arrive. The US was giving around \$US 10 million, that is the value of two Cruise Missiles. The Europeans gave 150 million ECU.<sup>42</sup> Blankets, tents, food and other material was flown in with coalition forces. Second, the “Operation Provide Comfort”, whereby a free zone was created at the Turkish-Iraqi border, where Iraqi troops were forbidden to enter. A no-fly zone was installed north of the 36th Parallel. This allowed the return of many Kurdish families to their homes or prepared UN camps. UN observers were placed in the neighbouring cities. The coalition troops were withdrawn at the beginning of July 1991. However, on 12 July a rapid deployment force was created in Turkey (called “Operation Raised Hammer”) which was prepared to intervene if Iraq did not respect resolution 687 (destruction of its nuclear potential) and 688 (UN humanitarian action).<sup>43</sup>

To constrain Saddam Hussein to reveal all the ABC construction and fabrication sites, in particular the UK and the US drove the UN to continue the embargo, decided before the war. Yet, the Iraqi government obstructed the working of the United National Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) which was established in May 1989 in accordance with UNSC resolution 687 (ceasefire) to carry out immediate on-site inspection of Iraq’s ABC capacities and to provide for their elimination.<sup>44</sup> This escalated into a new UNSC resolution 707 (15 August 1991), which extended the mandate of the UNSCOM. Yet, the latter’s control of Iraqi oil revenues makes the reconstruction of Iraq impossible. The UNSC resolution authorised Iraq to sell oil for \$US 1.6. billion worth, 30% of which will be used in a fund to settle war claims and the remaining 70% to be employed by the UN to buy medicines for distribution in Iraq. Since oil is the only foreign currency provider and foreign assistance and technology is needed to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure, as for instance the loss of 90% power generating capacity, Iraq was forced to get

<sup>41</sup> Arnold Hottinger, “Die arabische Welt nach dem Golf-Krieg”, p. 440, 447, fn. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, “Die bittere Bilanz des Golfkrieges”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 16 (12-18 April 1991), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Serge Marti, “Les Etats-Unis mettent en place une force alliée «de déploiement rapide» en Turquie”, *Le Monde*, 14/15 juillet 1991, speaks of 3000 soldiers coming from the US, UK, France, Turkey, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands covered by air-forces.

<sup>44</sup> For an account of the obstructions, see Thierry A. Brun, “Sous la tutelle de la faim”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 38, no. 435 (décembre 1991). For the findings of the UNSCOM, see Rolf Ekéus, “The United Nations Special Commission on Iraq”, in *SIPRI Yearbook 1992: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 509-524.



international credits from the Paris Club and the IMF.<sup>45</sup> If financial troubles were at the outset of the conflict, the winners did everything to *worsen* the situation. Following a similar logic, the UN provided medicines to relieve malnutrition and medical shortenings as reported by missions of UNICEF and the WHO in January 1991, and of the UN in March and June 1991, but no money to reconstruct the wrecked electricity and water distribution which was behind the epidemics.<sup>46</sup>

The Iraqi regime, riddled with problems, has increased its policing and control. Not only is Saddam Hussein in power, but his power has even extended within Ba'ath, the army and also the Guard. The conflict's outcome has given birth to a profoundly irredentist and anti-multilateralist regime.

### 3.2. The regional configuration: the disaggregation of the Arab world

The economic power management by an outside power presupposes the cooptation of regional actors into the system to share the burden. As in the aborted attempts in the financial sector, the "Arabisation" of US foreign policy in the Middle East does not seem to be working. Again, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are blocking all attempts to develop an Arab security system. If Egypt hoped to cash in some political advantages from its abandonment of the traditional policy which consisted of brokering inner-Arab solutions, it has been disappointed. In other words, King Hussein might prove right on the long run. The story of Arabisation reads like a Saudi "Salami"-tactic to use the US to get rid of all regional challengers to its power, step by step.

The attempt to "Arabise" began in December 1990 when the GCC, gathered at a summit in Doha, capital of Qatar, issued a declaration on regional security arrangements in which Iran, Pakistan and Turkey were invited to take part. On 6 March 1991, the so-called Damascus Declaration excludes them again. It is limited to the 8 Arab partners in the coalition, namely the GCC, Syria, and Egypt. It proposed a new security system where Egypt and Syria would constitute an Arab peace-keeping force to defend the Gulf states, for which the latter would pay via economic cooperation.<sup>47</sup> Yet, since then, the Gulf states are dragging their feet. The Sabah family has repeatedly played down the Arab involvement in the coalition effort. Kuwait has even forbidden an Egypt military aircraft to land in Kuwait. Egypt refuses to deploy forces, as the US has asked it to do, before the Kuwaitis have not officially invited them. Egypt tried to become the (well-paid) guardian of the petro-monarchies, whereas the latter did their best to ignore it.<sup>48</sup> Despite US

<sup>45</sup> Abbas Alnawrawi, "Iraq: economic consequences of the 1991 Gulf War", pp. 347-349.

<sup>46</sup> Such a policy furthers doubts about the winner's intentions, in particular if it is true that the allied air raids were targeting infrastructure *in order* to make Iraq dependent on foreign help - which was then refused. Abbas Alnawrawi, "Iraq: economic consequences of the 1991 Gulf War", p. 347 quotes a *Washington Post* article by B. Gellman (23 June 1991) for this.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Indyk, "Watershed in the Middle East", pp. 75-76.

<sup>48</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Koweït", pp. 3, 13-14.

pressure, the idea has been buried since.<sup>49</sup> Thus, not only Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, but also Egypt and Syria have been excluded from the Gulf balance by the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments.

Since the Iran-Iraq rivalry for regional hegemony was traditionally the basic dynamic factor, the new security system must take account of it. Yet, again Neorealist power analysis cannot but deplore the shortsightedness of the policies pursued. *Iran*, initially invited to take part in a future system, was eventually rebuffed by the Gulf states (in particular Saudi Arabia) for its advances after the war. Not being integrated in a regional security regime, Iran is engaged in a rapid rearmament programme. It made weapon deals with Russia, North Korea and Argentina. It started a diplomatic offensive to gain leverage by allying itself to those countries excluded to post-war benefits. Yemen was visited by Parliament's President Karrubi, and Rafsanjani went to Khartoum. Whereas the Iran-Yemen (and also Iran-Qatar, see below) *rapprochement* can be seen as directed against Saudi Arabia, the links to Sudan are certainly directed against Egypt. Sudan reintroduced the Sharia in March 1991. The Saudi press analysed this as the height of the Egyptian-Iranian conflict: a way of Iran to get into Egypt's backyard as Egypt (by helping massively Iraq during the first Gulf war) was getting into the Iranian sphere of interest. It could be seen as a start of the Iranian bid for regional hegemony.<sup>50</sup> If Iran was a possible hegemon, other systems should have been found to preempt its action, and not to provoke its rearmament. "It is also clear that no security system in the region can really be effective if the major Gulf power, Iran, is excluded."<sup>51</sup>

With regard to *Iraq*, the "equilibration of the balance of power" in the Gulf means that it is no longer a threat to its neighbours.<sup>52</sup> Yet, this straightforward answer is only a first step in a Neorealist analysis aware of the long-term effects of conflict outcomes on security structures. Consequently,

in a post-war environment, what sort of Iraq would be acceptable to the region and to the international community ... If Iraq is so weakened by a war that it runs the risk of being dismembered itself or falling under the control of radical Shi'ites with close links to Iran, it soon could pose a new set of problems for the alliance.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, US wants defeat of Hussein, but not of Iraq. This explains the meandering about the Kurdish and Shi'ite civil war (6 weeks), and the hope for a military putsch. Yet, no steps were taken to overthrow him when that was possible (see previous section). Waiting, as Iran had been doing in vain for 8 years, is not enough.

<sup>49</sup> Steven Simon, "US strategy in the Persian Gulf", *Survival*, vol. 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 87-88.

<sup>50</sup> For the following, see Wolfgang Köhler, "Der wahre Sieger im Golfkrieg", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 January 1992.

<sup>51</sup> George Joffe, "Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath", p. 198.

<sup>52</sup> Lothar Rühl, "Der Krieg am Golf. Militärischer Verlauf und politisch-strategische Probleme", *Europa Archiv*, no. 8 (1991), p. 246.

<sup>53</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, "The Gulf Crisis: diplomacy or force?", p. 512.

Yet, the major mistake for future stability is what one could call the “Versailles Syndrome”, i.e. the setting up of a peace that produces not stability, but an unremovable irredentism.<sup>54</sup> In conformity to resolution 687 of the UNSC, a UN commission fixed the new border between Kuwait and Iraq in April 1992. It did not limit itself to install the status quo, but favoured Kuwait. The only notable Iraqi port, Um-Quasr, in all prior border drawings entirely part of Iraq, has been divided in order to deprive Iraq of portuary facilities. This implies a complete landlock of Iraq and is unacceptable for any Iraqi government, authoritarian or not.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, commentators, and to a lesser extent politicians, seem afraid of the risk of isolating Iraq via the unacceptable demand of respecting once and forever the border with Kuwait and by high reparations.<sup>56</sup>

Thus *Saudi Arabia* has got rid of all possible regional interference in its policies. Neither in the Gulf, with Iraq or Iran, nor in the Mahrek, with Egypt and Syria, is there any power left to challenge Saudi policy. But Saudi Arabia is not strong enough to stay alone. If Arabisation does not work, the US is committed to be present itself. Bahrain and Kuwait (September 1991) have for the first time in Middle Eastern history signed bilateral defence agreements (10 years) with the US. Saudi Arabia made a tacit agreement. All agreements made US *military* dreams come true. They are about prepositioning of military equipment, joint exercises and access to military bases (in particular airports).<sup>57</sup> Yet, as one analyst notes, the Gulf monarchies seem to pursue the foreign policy aim of entrapping and materially interesting a number of countries in their defence. The different military agreements and weapon deals are like portfolio investment where the risk is spread over different insurance companies.<sup>58</sup> Having rebuffed the regional powers, the GCC has become completely dependent on the US, and tries to make this dependence mutual.

To complete the shattering of the Arab world, the war reopened border questions in the region. On 30 september 1992, there was a border clash between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, near Khafous. Qatar is seen by some GCC countries as a Troian horse for its renewed contact with Iran for a defence arrangement and for having send back its ambassador to Baghdad. At the border clash, Iran and Iraq are supporting Qatar which boycotts the GCC meetings. Following Egyptian mediation, the border issue has been resolved giving right to Qatar’s claims — but the independent foreign policy of Qatar

<sup>54</sup> This is a repeated point in the Realist literature. Writing on Vienna 1815, but meaning Versailles 1918-19, Henry Kissinger castigated this short-sighted “unrealistic” policy.

<sup>55</sup> Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), p. 3, fn. 3.

<sup>56</sup> George Joffe, “Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath”, p. 198.

<sup>57</sup> See Martin Indyk, “Watershed in the Middle East”, p. 76 and Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Olivier Da Lage, “Illusoire sécurité collective sans l’Irak et l’Iran”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), p. 4.

seems to be the price for it. Border disputes have also arisen anew between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Negotiations have started in September 1992, and will drag on.<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, one can say that no form of a post-conflict security regime has been found that would integrate the major regional actors. The result seems to be a military security system based on bilateral US-Egypt and US-Arab Peninsula relations. The system is characterised by a US deterrence force strengthened by prepositioning and regional rearmament (see below). US deterrence works for Iraq (and implicitly against Iran), whose irredentism can hardly be opposed by mere force and humiliation. The attacks in January 1992 have pushed the population closer to Saddam Hussein, because he was considered the only leader able to defend national pride against Western humiliations.<sup>60</sup> No system to integrate the two major regional hegemonies in a common structure has been devised.

The old play of changing partnerships has not been fundamentally altered. The “rules” of the Gulf still apply, namely “the inability of any regional power to achieve dominance, and the inability of any outside power to manage the region successfully on its own.”<sup>61</sup> Some ranks have been exchanged. Syria has taken over the place left by Iraq (which had taken, at the time, the role of the Shah’s Iran).<sup>62</sup> The US’ two Arab placeholders, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have exchanged their role through the conflict. Saudi Arabia is taking the most pro-US line, as did Egypt after Camp David, whereas Egypt has tried to become the Arab conciliator.

Denied a role as defender of the Arab Gulf, Egypt was left to play handmaiden to America’s new dominant status in the region. Since all the Arab states now sought good relations with Washington, Cairo offered its services as broker. Promoting Syrian relations with the United States was particularly important to the creation of an Egyptian-led postwar Arab order.<sup>63</sup>

The entire Middle Eastern Security Complex has become even more disaggregated. The Gulf conflict was a consequence of the decline of Arab unity and the failure of pan-Arabism.<sup>64</sup> It destroyed what was left. Generally the Arab world has become articulated in a construct of subsystems. In the Gulf, the GCC will become more and more integrated under Saudi auspices. North Africa is organised around the *Union Maghreb Arabe* (Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania), created on 17 February 1989, which elaborated common political solutions for the crisis. Marginalised from the Middle East, the UMA is refocusing on Europe, as can be seen in the security plans for Conference for Security and

<sup>59</sup> It seems that Saudi Arabia is trying to exacerbate the economic crisis in Yemen to stop the democratisation process. See Olivier La Lage, “Illusoire sécurité collective sans l’Iran et l’Irak”, pp. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Shahram Chubin, “Post-war Gulf security”, p. 152.

<sup>62</sup> Bassam Tibi, “Die irakische Kuwait-Invasion und die Golfkrise”, pp. 22-23.

<sup>63</sup> Martin Indyk, “Watershed in the Middle East”, p. 77.

<sup>64</sup> Bernhard Lewis, “Rethinking the Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 4 (Fall 1992), pp. 99f.

Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) or the French proposal of “five-plus-five.” In the Near East, the system pivots around the Arab-Israeli conflict. These subregional groupings withstand disruption, and have already begun to replace the activities of the Arab League.<sup>65</sup>

That the existing structures fall apart must not mean that the conflicts therein can be more easily resolved. It means that its stability depends on making any linkages between them impossible. Instead of gaining flexibility by playing out one area against the other, the present equilibrium is most inflexible. It allows for the status quo or a major disruption. The only hope of loosening the Gordian knot, is the Arab-Israeli question. Otherwise, the peace is just the temporary silence until repressed problems will burst out.

### 3.3. The central-regional link (I): proliferation in the Gulf

Once the regional structures are not working, stability must be achieved through the control of the means that regional actors, at least those willing to overthrow the *status quo*, are able to develop. If only regional actors had no weapons to threaten the North either directly or through their regional *pions*. If the major lesson of the war could be called that only nuclear weapons can defend Southern countries from Northern attack<sup>66</sup>, then nuclear proliferation is the worst enemy to regional security.

A further reason why arms proliferation became a major issue *ex post* was that the discussion concerning how to avoid a similar conflict in the future meant to look at the origins of this one. Embarrassingly, the Iraqi power that required such an enormous coalition to be destroyed was constructed by the destroyers themselves (see Table 10.1).<sup>67</sup>

This is not limited to conventional weapons. One of Saddam Hussein’s power resources was his credible threat to use chemical weapons. This is part of a long-standing Iraqi programme to develop ABC capacities. The programme took a double turn after the destruction of the Osirak complex in 1981 (for the initial nuclear programme, see Table 10.2). On the one hand, Iraq was looking for the so-called A-bomb of the poor, chemical weapons. The US, France and Italy were cautious. By 1983/84, the CIA informed the German government that a German firm *Karl Kolb* had constructed an industry for chemical weapons in Samarra, Iraq that have been used in the First Gulf War. In 1985, a Swiss audit confirmed that the site could only be used for chemical gas production.<sup>68</sup> Between 1983 and 1987, 59 German firms were either directly or indirectly involved in the production, officially declared to be for pesticides. In 1984, the firm *Rhema-Labortechnik*, for instance, delivered 2 gas-chambers, specially enlarged to host 6 dogs (beagles) which react similarly to human beings on lethal gas. Pesticides? The

<sup>65</sup> George Joffe, “Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath”, pp. 198-99.

<sup>66</sup> Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Elisabeth Picard, “Les ventes d’armes à l’Irak: une simple question d’argent”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 37, no. 438 (septembre 1990), p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> Wolfgang Hoffmann, “Die große Heuchelei”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 5 (25-31 January 1991).

**Table 10.1 Arms sales to Iraq**

	1970-1989		1980-1989	
	(In million US\$ of 1985)	(in percentage)	(In million US\$ of 1985)	(in percentage)
USSR . . . . .	19 237	61	13 396	53
France . . . . .	5 538	18	5 054	20
China . . . . .	1 664	5	1 664	7
Brazil . . . . .	1 121	4	1 121	4
Egypt . . . . .	1 108	4	1 108	4
Czechoslovakia	703	2	614	2
Other countries	2 166	6	2 116	10
TOTAL .	31 537	100	25 073	100

Source: SIPRI, Stockholm, 8/1990

This is based on orders, not on actual payments. Iraq owes 25 billion FF to France and 3,7 billion roubles to the USSR.

produced gases were neurotoxic, including *Zyklon B*. The German journalist Egmont Koch holds that toxic gases were tried out on human prisoners to see if the new mix *Zyklon B-Tabun* was working through the gas-mask. The prisoners died after a few minutes. By 1987, construction was finished. The annual production was between 4000 and 15000 tons of chemical weapons. The new mix was tried out on a Kurdish village Halabja in March 1988. 5000 deaths were reported.<sup>69</sup>

Concomitantly, since the Israeli attack in 1981, the Iraqi government has tried to produce an A-bomb of the Hiroshima type, i.e. not based on plutonium, but on uranium enriched to 90% of its isotope 235. The production does not require a reactor, but gas-centrifuges. German firms were providing the technology, exporting (illegally, but barely controlled) gas-centrifuges to produce enriched Uranium, as well as mobile laboratories (installed on trucks) for micro- and toxicobiological experiments (B-weapons).<sup>70</sup> During a UN inspection at the beginning of 1992, Iraq declared that German firms provided material for centrifuges that allowed an annual production of around 75-100 kilogrammes of enriched Uranium, i.e. around 4 atomic bombs a year. A Yugoslavian firm was responsible for the enrichment technology at Tarmiya, 45 kilometres Northeast of Baghdad. Iraq itself produced 119 tons of Uranium-ore, bought another 422 tons in Brazil, Portugal, Niger, Italy and Germany. It got enriched Uranium from the USSR and France for

<sup>69</sup> Annette Levy-Willard, "La filière allemande des gaz mortels irakiens", *Liberation*, 26-27 Janvier 1991, pp. 5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Wolfgang Hoffmann, "Irak, Irak und nochmals Irak", *Die Zeit*, vol. 47, no. 10 (28 February-6 March 1992), p. 26.

**Table 10.2. International collaboration for the Iraqi plutonium (Nagasaki-) bomb**

**1957:** The Baghdad-Pact decided to construct a nuclear research centre in Iraq. This nuclear development policy was part of the Western concept “Atoms for Peace”, elaborated in 1953 by the Eisenhower administration with which Third World countries were given nuclear know-how to make them less attracted by World communism. This project was not realised, because of the coup against (pro-Western) King Feisal. General Quassam opened toward the USSR and got Soviet “Atoms for Peace”.

**1967:** The Soviet nuclear research plant close to Tuwaitha started to work in 1967. The USSR did, however, not provide a dual-use plant of the Tschernobyl-type.

**1974:** The Iraqi-French cooperation started in 1974 when Premier Chirac signed with the Iraqi government a nuclear cooperation treaty. In 1976, it was decided to produce a reactor-type (Osiris) used in France to test the resistance of different materials exposed to radiation, i.e. for an independent nuclear plant production. Yet, it had the double advantage of producing Plutonium (although in small quantities) and to allow this to remain hidden: the material exposed to radiation that was used to “breed” Plutonium could be quickly removed and stored outside the complex. The International Atom Energy Agency (IAEA) which is supposed to control that no civil nuclear plant is used to “breed” Plutonium arrived only twice a year, sev-

eral weeks preannounced and could control only those rooms where radioactive elements have been signalled. This easy camouflage of Plutonium production might have been the reason why Iraq decided for this reactor-type. This allows a production of 16-24 killogrammes Plutonium a year, enough for 3-4 A-bombs of the Plutonium (Nagasaki)-type.

**1980s:** From this point onwards, Iraq tried to buy the whole nuclear cycle. “Breeding” material was bought from the German firm *Nukem*, a plant for the chemical separation of Plutonium from the radiated Uran, from the Italian *Snia-Technint* following a Iraqi-Italian nuclear cooperation accord. Then, at the beginning of the 1980s, an Italian firm sent a small plant for the production of such “breeding” elements. Finally, the French gave a plant for the treatment of nuclear waste. Now, Iraq could buy natural Uranium on the international market, produce the breeding elements, radiate them in the reactor, separate the Plutonium, and handle the nuclear waste — all on their own.

**7 June 1981:** Some months before the official starting of the whole complex, Israel attacked Osiraq (Tammuz) which did not destroy the centre of the reactor.

All this was well known by the beginning of the 1980s and made public by Hearings of Roger Richter, inspector of the IAEA, to the US Senate in 1981.

Source: Roland Kollert, “Wie der Irak an der Bombe baute” (How Iraq built the bomb), *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 7 (8-14 February 1991), pp. 15-17. The author is physicist and consultant for the “enquete-commission” of the German Parliament on “Future Nuclear energy policy”.

purposes of “research”.<sup>71</sup>

Once the technology to produce ABC weapons was acquired, Iraq needed the launching supports. Once again, German know-how for missiles has reached Iraq via the former German-Argentinean cooperation and directly via Switzerland and Egypt. Until

<sup>71</sup> Udo Ulfkotte, “Offiziell wahrt Bagdad Stillschweigen über das Atomprogramm”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 January 1992, pp. 1-2.

**Table 10.3. Iraqi weapon and finance channels**

*Matrix Churchill*, a firm near Coventry, was the central node in the international system of weapons-gathering. With the end of the first Gulf war, the British government, pushed by its Ministry of Commerce and against the wishes of the Foreign Office, did not block, but even encouraged exports known to be used for the construction of weapon systems. British intelligence found out in October 1988 that Iraq was building a super-gun. Yet, the export-licenses were not repelled. The firm was sold 1987 to a cover firm, whose general director was to become Safa al-Habobi, a senior official of the Iraqi Ministry for industrial and military production. The deals were going on, because UK intelligence used the Matrix Churchill to gather information about the Iraqi rearmament.

On 4 August 1989, the FBI found out that the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro*, Branch Atlanta, had channelled illegal credits of \$US 5 billion to firms part of the Iraqi weapon providing system Iraq between 1985 and 1989 (although yet officially denied, shown to be known by the Italian centre). In October 1989, Tareq Aziz complained about this to Secretary of State James Baker. In November a \$US 1 billion credit guarantee for wheat exports was given to Iraq. The chairman of the Bank Committee of the House of Representatives, Henry Gonzalez, found out in 1990 that not only the Bush administration knew about the super-gun project, but that it had given export licenses for Gerald Bull's space-research firm that allowed the latter to trade with places known to the CIA for being Iraqi military bases.

Sources: "Die Werkzeuge des Schlächters" ("The instruments of the slaughterman", initially published by the *Sunday Times*), *Die Zeit*, vol. 48, no. 49 (27 November-3 December 1992), pp. 13-16; Joe Stark, "L' 'Irakgate', ou le cynisme-roi", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), p. 7; Alan Friedman, "Dollars für den Diktator" ("Dollars for the dictator"), *Die Zeit*, vol. 48, no. 49 (27 November-3 December 1992), p. 14.

now, civil missile industries can export without official agreement by the German Ministry of Economics.<sup>72</sup> Yet, the major link has been found in an intricate link between the US branch of an Italian bank and a UK firm (see Table 10.3). It seems that US, Italian, and British authorities used Matrix, BNL and other firms for foreign military links with Irak.<sup>73</sup>

Now, one could say, this is old stuff. Burned fingers avoid fire. The US and other will not produce a system wrecked by arms-deals. At the beginning of the crisis, analysts were quite confident that the current crisis would eventually cause the international community to consider seriously the need for sharp limitations on arms sales to the states of the Gulf area and perhaps the Middle East as a whole. Others were more cautious and anticipated or legitimated an arms race. Consequently, at least one observer argues for rearmament as a way to preserve a regional balance of power policy (against Iraq), even though

<sup>72</sup> Wolfgang Hoffmann, "Die große Heuchelei", *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 5 (25-31 January 1991).

<sup>73</sup> Joe Stark, "L' 'Irakgate', ou le cynisme-roi", *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 40, no. 467 (février 1993), p. 7.



regional arms-control then becomes more difficult. For Kemp, the vicious circles of insecurity/arms race that makes a peace treaty illusionary and the lack of a regional peace for making insecurity/arms race unavoidable.<sup>74</sup> This is a typical power-centred position.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, despite warnings, after the conflict, proliferation came up, because the US needed to arm its allies. True, proliferation cannot distinguish between today's friends and tomorrow's foes. All the calculations of balances become useless. Since the Gulf states will never be strong enough to sustain aggressive policies, the US can take sides and build a regional security system around forward deterrence. Sweeping concerns about proliferation aside, the arms sales and orders to the Middle East have massively increased during and since the end of the conflict.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, the Bush administration quickly forgot all the gratifying speeches made during the conflict. The US Export-Import Bank which guarantees loans (linked to US sales) had a policy of not underwriting arms sales to developing countries since 1968. Yet, Congress opened the door in 1990 by allowing a \$US 1.2 billion guarantee for the sale of military helicopters to Turkey. The Bush administration has asked for another \$US 1 billion to finance overseas sales of military hardware.<sup>77</sup>

Facing a dramatic drop in arms sales in 1991 of around 40%, that is from \$US 41.1 billion in 1990 to \$US 24.7 billion in 1991, the US and other producers lobby to sell abroad — in particular since their own governments are cutting arms expenditure. The Middle East remains the first address. Saudi Arabia, the biggest US customer, spent \$US 5.6 billion, i.e. around 40% of total US sales in the Middle East (\$US 12 billion) — which is more than the total Soviet arms sales (\$US 5 billion). US arms sales to the third world rose to a record \$US 18.2 billion in 1990, partly because of large contracts signed with Saudi-Arabia after the invasion of Kuwait. Sales fell by 22% in 1991 to \$US 14.2 billion. From 1988 and 1991, the US accounted for half of all arms sales to the Middle East: \$US 36.5 billion out of a total of \$US 73 billion. Those sales accounted for 72-75% of the value of all weapons the United States sold to the third world during that period.<sup>78</sup>

On 14 September 1990, the US had agreed to the largest weapons deal in history with Saudi Arabia: \$US 20 billion over several years (in two tranches, of which the first of \$US 7.3 billion as emergency has already been delivered) including advanced tanks and

<sup>74</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, "The Gulf Crisis: diplomacy or force?", p. 517.

<sup>75</sup> After the conflict, he devised a possible moratorium on certain armaments including a freeze on all surface-to-surface missile transfers to the region and argued for confidence-building measures between Israel and its Arab neighbours. See Geoffrey Kemp, "The Middle East arms race: can it be controlled?", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 441-56.

<sup>76</sup> Some concern has been retained for ABC weapon systems with President Bush's Executive Order No. 12375 which limits the spread of chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles.

<sup>77</sup> *Congressional Quarterly*, 7 December 1991, p. 89.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Pear, "U.S. Sales of Arms to the Third World Declined by 22% Last Year", *The New York Times*, 21 July 1992.

**Table 10.4** Conventional weapons ordered by Middle Eastern countries in 1991

Buyer	Seller	Designation	Number ordered	Description	Number delivered
Bahrain	USA	AH-64 Apache	8	Helicopter	-
Egypt	CSFR	L-59	48	Jet Trainer	-
	USA	F-16C	46	Fighter	-
		AGM-65D	40	Air-to-surface missile	-
		AGM-65G	40	Air-to-surface missile	-
Iran	CSFR	T-55	300	Main battle tank	-
Israel	FRG	BRDM-2	50	Scout car	50
		TPz-1	8	APC	8
		Dolphin	2	Submarine	-
	NL	Patriot battery	1	SAM system	1
		MIM-104 Patriot	32	Surface-to-air missile	32
	USA	F-15A Eagle	10	Fighter	-
		AIM-9M	300	Air-to-air missile	-
		Patriot battery	1	SAM system	-
		MIM-104 Patriot	64	Surface-to-air missile	-
	Oman	USA	M-60-A3	-	Main battle tank
V-300 Commando			119	APC	-
Qatar	RSA	G-5 155mm	12	Towed howitzer	12
Saudi Arabia	USA	AIM-7M Sparrow	770	Air-to-air missile	-
		M-113-A2	207	APC	-
		M-548	50	APC	-
		M-578	43	Recovery vehicle	-
		Patriot Battery	14	SAM system	-
		MIM-104 PAC-2	758	Surface-to-air missile	-
		HMMWV	2300	Light vehicle	-
Syria	CSFR	T-72	300	Main battle tank	-
	NKor	Scud-C Launcher	-	SSM launcher	20
		Scud-C	-	SSM	100
UAE	USA	AH-64 Apache	20	Helicopter	-
		Agm-144A	620	Air-to-surface missile	-

Source: SIPRI, 1992

armoured vehicles, trucks, Patriot ground-to-air missiles, Apache anti-tank helicopters, new airfields, barracks and other support structures. It could be called “the defense industry relief act 1990”.<sup>79</sup> At the beginning of January, the administration decided to delay the remaining tranche of 13-14 billion until after the war — due to pro-Israeli lobbying.<sup>80</sup> In March 1991, the Saudi arms purchase request was put on hold to sort out the financing

<sup>79</sup> Eric Schmitt, “U.S. to Sell Saudis \$20 Billions in Arms; Weapons Deal is Largest in History”, *The New York Times*, 15 September 1990, p. A5.

<sup>80</sup> Eric Schmitt, “\$13 Billion Weapons Sale To Saudis Will Be Delayed”, *The New York Times*, 5 January 1991, p. 5.

after the war. With the hindsight of today, it is not sure if the orders will be fulfilled (see Table 10.4). But at least the US has reversed the trend and effectively crowded out European competitors that were increasingly encroaching on the US market share in the Middle East. “Developments in 1991 tended to underline the predominant European view that the net effect of the 1991 Gulf War would not be to increase the size of the global market. Rather it would be to restore the strong dominance over the arms market that the US enjoyed prior to late 1970s.”<sup>81</sup>

That exports did not stop at conventional weapons that could pose major troubles in future conflicts is shown by the permissive decisions of the Bush administration with regard to medium-range missiles. Alain Gresh quotes a *Washington Post* article entitled “This is a Funny Way to Stop the Mideast Arms Race” from August 1992, which reports the Bush administration’s final list of missile projects that US producers are not allowed to contribute with parts or know-how in one way or another. After heavy lobbying, the administration allowed exceptions for the Middle East: the Egyptian projects of an improved SCUD and of Condor II; all Iraqi projects; the Israeli missiles Jericho I and II and the satellite launcher Shavit; the improved Syrian Scuds and the missile El-Fatah; the improved Syrian Scuds ...<sup>82</sup> In short, in the two years following the Gulf conflict, the US got contracts totalling \$US 28.5 billion in the Middle East.<sup>83</sup>

This US policy is indirectly criticised by the former director of the *International Institute for Strategic Studies* in London. He says that the policy pursued since 25 years which aims at providing security for the Gulf states by enormous arms sales, has not been exactly stabilising. Without accord of the arms-selling countries, the security of the region cannot be apprehended optimistically.<sup>84</sup> In May 1992, the five biggest weapons-exporting countries (or the five veto power of the UNSC), the US, Russia, France, the UK and China met in Washington. After a two day conference, they could not agree on any limitation of conventional arms exports to the Middle East. They agreed on temporary rules for ABC weapon systems. China had for the first time given its acquiescence not to export technology that could be used for such purposes.<sup>85</sup>

This means in conclusion that the central balance, instead of calming or “securing” the region, relies entirely on US conventional military deterrence backed by local forces. Those supporting it might point to the European experience where a protracted period of deterrence has first developed a common sense of limited conflict (avoiding the nuclear weapon) and then the breaking up of the whole system. Those arguing against it might

<sup>81</sup> Ian Anthony, “The United States: arms exports and implications for arms production”, in Herbert Wulf (ed.) *Arms Industry Limited* (SIPRI and Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, p. 3, fn. 11.

<sup>83</sup> Alain Gresh, “Regain d’activisme dans le Golfe”, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> “Les Etats du Golfe n’ont rien appris” (entretien avec M. François Heisbourg, directeur de l’Institut international d’études stratégiques), *Le Monde*, 17 janvier 1992, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> For the major German newspaper, this news is worth 100 words, in: “Keine Einigung über Begrenzung der Waffenexporte”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 June 1992, p. 5.

note that Europe had developed a security structure including a system of confidence-building measures. Military deterrence, i.e. the means of containment, would not have sufficed to create a system of greater international stability, the objective of containment. Without the attraction and vitality of one societal project, no convergence would have happened. Thus, relying exclusively on military deterrence and not on a regional security structure might work if the countries of the Gulf develop a legitimated domestic and international policy. The domestic development will be tackled later. As we have seen, in the former section, this is certainly not the case on the international level. After the next conflict, this story of proliferation will be repeated.

### 3.4. The central-regional link (II): US foreign policy in the Middle East

The policy we're pursuing now, is one in which we want to minimize the U.S. military presence on the ground in the region. It's probably easier to do if we help out friends like the Saudis and the gulf states to have sufficient capability to be able to defend themselves long enough for us to be able to get back.

Defence Secretary Richard Cheney,  
as quoted in Patrick E. Tyler, "Cheney Wants No Limit On Arms  
for Gulf Allies", *The New York Times*, 20 March 1991, p. A13.

Having temporarily destroyed the military capabilities of Iraq, the US seems to have taken on board the central aim of the *Israeli* deterrence strategy. This strategy consists in preserving military-technological supremacy vis-a-vis any potential Arab challenger, possibly also through preemptive action.<sup>86</sup>

But this preemptive action, to be successful, cannot rely solely on military deterrence. It can, or even must, rely on linkage. In the quest for regional security, the different subsystems, the Gulf and the Near East, appear more disarticulated than before. The unsuccessful Iraqi attempt to link them via Arab and Palestinian propaganda, and Scuds on Israel, as well as the disengagement of the Gulf states from the Palestinian question, leave the US as the major actor able to play on linkage or not.

The strategy, at least officially, is to use (1) a specific linkage from the Gulf to the Near East, namely US hegemony as sole security provider against Iran and Iraq, (2) to start the solution of the Palestinian question, and thus dynamics in the Near East, to stabilise, in turn, the Gulf.

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed reports that before the outbreak of the October (Yom Kippur) War in 1973, National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger spoke privately about wars that make diplomatic moves easier. When the situation is hot, new arrangements can be forged. Sid-Ahmed discusses the possibility that the US wanted an Israeli-Egypt conflict, so that

<sup>86</sup> Andreas Rieck, "Der Golfkrieg als Schlüsselereignis für den arabisch-israelischen Konflikt", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 7-8/91 (8 February 1991), p. 44.

it could use its leverage on both in order to make a more enduring settlement.<sup>87</sup> This nearly collapsed when Egypt was advancing *too much*. Kissinger used the “hot” situation to inaugurate the first Middle East Conference in Geneva under US and Soviet auspices both to co-opt the Soviets and to separate the Egypt-Israeli question. The war gave him the necessary resources to influence Israel, both because it invigorated the security needs of Israel and because the US was vital for its survival. In this argument, Camp David is the US-brokered result of the October (Yom Kippur) war. There are too many analogies here for today’s commentators not to see a second version of Camp David in the US attempts to broker a (Madrid) conference for a separate Israel-Syria peace — and maybe this time for a true Palestinian solution.<sup>88</sup>

In any case, the “momentum” was to be used, the “window of opportunity” to be exploited. The US managed to impose all the preconditions posed by the Israeli government: exclusion of the PLO and of any Palestinian delegate from Jerusalem; exclusion of the UN from the talks; exclusion of Jerusalem for the agenda; discussion of a transitory status for self-government in the occupied territories and not a final solution. On the other hand, the US and Israel knew that having put so much prestige into the process, this could not end without any result, if the future of the question and thus the legitimacy of US hegemony was not to be seriously handicapped. Thus, the Palestinian-Israeli issue will be read as an indicator of the power that the US acquired during the conflict. To be more precise, it will be seen as an indicator of two US resource-translations, (1) the translation of military dominance into diplomatic leverage, and (2) the linkage of the Gulf to the Levant. Expectedly from the relational power-security framework, potential power relies on two kind of linkages: both between security sectors and between security complexes. In other words, the translation dynamics in the parallel Palestinian conflict will be a power-indicator of the feedback dynamics of the Gulf conflict.

Comment transformer la puissance en influence? Tel est le défi auquel se trouve confrontée l’Administration Bush au Moyen et au Proche-Orient au lendemain de la guerre du Golfe.<sup>89</sup>

The initial conditions for the linkages seemed positive. On top of the above-mentioned reasons (chapter 7) for the increased dynamics of the regional system, namely the decrease of Soviet, now Russian, power and the reorientation of regional actors toward the remaining superpower, the outcome of the conflict has notably weakened some actors whose anti-Israel position were well known: Syria and Saudi Arabia. The US could use that leverage to push for peace talks. Indeed, importantly for the power-analysis, the extent to which actors gave up long-established policy principles can be seen as an indicator of their

<sup>87</sup> Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, *Nach vier Kriegen im Nahen Osten. Thesen zu einer offensiven Friedenspolitik* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1977), pp. 28-29, 38.

<sup>88</sup> These are *ex post* rationalisations, of course. But power analysis of the encompassing rational choice kind automatically tend toward possible overrationalisations. This will be taken up in chapter 15.

<sup>89</sup> “Éditorial”, *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 399.

power once the conflict is over. Hence, analysts weigh concessions unthinkable before the conflict with *post hoc* policy positions. For an economic power-approach, the question focuses around the result of the Madrid Conference that will decide, whether or not the US has spent past capital to acquire a future one in the Middle East.

#### 4. A precedent for conflict management in the “new world order”?

Bush’s new world order was said to rely (1) on the end of an ideological conflict which makes Northern cooperation possible; (2) on the end of the rule of might which makes the recurrence to multilateralism or at least Concert diplomacy possible. Aggression does not stand, as he said.

The non-existence of a new world order which would have found its founding myth in the Gulf conflict can be seen on the war’s impact on the UN and major actors on the international scene. The basic question of the new world order appears to boil down to the international management of US unilateralism.

##### 4.1. The UN after the Gulf conflict

The first easy question to be handled is whether this was a multilateral war, in the sense of collective security. Although, the UN came close to playing the role initially thought for it — deterrence of territorial aggression, economic and military sanctions, finally international peacekeeping operation — it could never really play it out. The US and some of its allies prevented the UN from playing this role which was the centrepiece of Soviet and French diplomacy.

At first, one should note the inherent limits of the deployed UN system. It was not a full-fledged application of collective security as it is, at least theoretically, part of the UN. The UN Charter asks for the establishment of independent UN forces and aims ideally to challenge and eventually replace states in their international monopoly of force. Since these troops have been dead letter since 1945, the UN can according to Art. 106 of the UN Charter decide to intervene militarily (in the sense of chapter VII), if the five permanent members of the UN, after consultation of the other members, decide so. In the case of the Second Gulf War, the superpowers did not even proceed this way. There was no consensus for a military action of the UNSC. Thus, based on Art. 42, last sentence and Art. 48, paragraph 1, they authorised a groups of states to intervene militarily. The UNSC renounced the imposition of mechanisms that would allow a continuous control of the military action. It could not stop them. In other words, the UNSC made a “sovereign” decision — to leave the whole to the coalition. A blank check duly filled out by the US.

On different occasions, the coalition did not follow the spirit of the UN and the UNSC resolutions. The list is long. The US applied the embargo with military means even before the UNSC Resolution 665 sanctioned this action on 25 August 1990. Although the first military troops were enough to defend Saudi Arabia, the US decided to double the troops on 8 November 1990. Hence they became a possible offensive force. The UNSC

Resolution 678 from 28 November 1990, the so-called ultimatum, was arguably not exactly a war-declaring ultimatum, because it did not specify the means to be used. On top of this, resolutions (might) need the unanimity of the veto-powers. The fact that China was abstaining was never taken up in the following discussion. At least for one analyst, this is, however, controversial: is only the explicit denial, or also an abstention an expression of disagreement?<sup>90</sup> The Security Council was not asked to pronounce on the cease-fire agreement, not to speak of the peace.<sup>91</sup> The UNSC Resolution that imposed the sanctions (661 from 6 August 1990) excluded explicitly food and medicines. The after-war blockade is not backed by the UN.<sup>92</sup> In no UNSC resolution can any indication be found to attack the state of Iraq in order to weaken the economic or political fabric of the nation. If the attack on air forces, scuds and the air defence system was militarily valid, the same cannot be said for the attacks directed against the Ministry of Justice, Ba'ath Party facilities; water and power supply from Northern Iraq.<sup>93</sup>

Without any control of the events, Secretary General Perez de Cuellar declared in a largely ignored interview to *Le Monde* at the beginning of February 1991, that this was “not a UN war”.<sup>94</sup> His successor Boutros Boutros-Ghali made it very clear from the outset that he was not willing to get entrapped in the same way. Cautious about the gained importance and overburden of the UN, he tried to use the leverage to develop autonomous UN means, much as did with French and Soviet diplomacy. Hence, during the Summer 1992, he launched the idea of a UN Rapid Deployment Force that would give the UN the independent logistics to intervene when required. Needless to say, the French immediately agreed to reserve 1000 soldiers of a special intervention force within 24 hours and another 1000 within a week. Boutros-Ghali declared that “if I got another 20 countries to join, I would be in a much better position” to defend victims of aggressions.<sup>95</sup> Therefore he might probably never get them.

It was not a UN war, and had little to do with collective security, but more with a traditional Concert policy. Still, some of the resolutions showed some imagination for innovative moves. Was the Second Gulf War a precedent for international peace-keeping?

Some prudent optimism has been voiced in much more limited aims. Thus, the UNSC resolution 687 which guarantees the Iraq-Kuwait border and sanctions the transgression with international counter-measures might show how the UN can be used as a further

<sup>90</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonflikts*.

<sup>91</sup> Barbara Rogers, “Wanted: A New Policy for the United Nations”, in Victoria Brittain (ed.) *The Gulf Between Us. The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press), p. 146.

<sup>92</sup> Barbara Rogers, “Wanted: A New Policy for the United Nations”, p. 147.

<sup>93</sup> One of the major discussion at the end of the conflict concerned this traditional *ius belli* argument about the proportionality of means.

<sup>94</sup> Sandro Medici, “L’ONU e la guerra: l’inganno”, *Il Manifesto*, 10 February 1991, p. 2, reports that the news were either not reported or received with such incredulity, that the (anti-war) *Manifesto* was asked if they did not make up the whole thing.

<sup>95</sup> “Auf uns richten sich zu große Hoffnungen”, interview with Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Die Zeit*, vol. 47, no. 33 (7-13 August 1992), p. 3.

deterrent for border crossings. The UNSC has, furthermore, limited Iraqi B and C capacities which could presage an international interdiction of these weapons systems.<sup>96</sup> In the light of the power-discussion above, even this limited new role of the UN is highly debatable. The UN has always guaranteed borders. What adds a deterrent to this guarantee is the extraordinary military backing. In a sense the resolution justifies *ex ante* a US forward defence in the Gulf. With regard to the BC weapons control, the effectiveness of the resolution is again backed by US foreign policy, which has long fought against the A-bomb of the poor. As long as nuclear weapons are excluded, it seems not to be a general move to ban highly lethal weapon systems, but a way to use the UN system to restrict access to the “ABC country’s club”.

The most spectacular move has, however, been the UNSC resolution 688 from 5 April 1991 which set the preconditions to intervene in favour of the Kurdish minority in Northern Iraq. The international legal backing for the intervention is not clear. The genocide-convention is a convention to ban domestic genocides to be sanctioned by domestic trials and is said not to cover state-terrorism. The protocol II to the Geneva convention from 1977 (for civil wars) cannot be imposed by a third party. The compromise formula of these treaties is always the same: a minimum of agreed self-restriction — or the risk of no mutual restriction. John Major’s idea of a protected zone, which was implemented with the resolution, is not covered by these texts, if it requires overriding Iraqi opposition.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the UNSC resolution cannot refer to firm legal ground. It refers ambiguously to (1) the right of international intervention for guaranteeing the conditions of peace (chapter VII of the Charter), as used for Desert Shield and Desert Storm and to (2) the sovereignty of all member states. The intervention to protect the Kurdish minority under chapter VII represents a precedent to consider massive human rights abuses, and not only military conflicts, to justify multilateral intervention against a member state.<sup>98</sup> But this remains a long-term process. The reason it worked in Northern Iraq was not a general consensus about such a kind of intervention, but the weakness of Iraq.

Then, finally, there might be a last way in which the feedback dynamics of the Gulf conflict may have indirectly strengthened the multilateral regime: it could have become an obligatory passage point for US administrations before unilaterally decided intervention. Has the Gulf conflict started a precedence, such as to make the UN approval necessary for US international interventions, or for assuring domestic US approval?

It is too early to judge this very limited impact. The point could be made with more conviction if the conflict would have happened in the US sphere of influence, as for instance in Latin America. The Middle East is a tricky security region where the US is

<sup>96</sup> Rüdiger Wolfrum, “Die Aufgaben der Vereinten Nationen im Wandel”, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B 36/91 (30 August 1991), p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Leicht, “Machtlos gegen Mörder? Saddam Hussein und die Ordnung der Welt: Vom geringen Glanz und großen Elend des Völkerrechts”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 17 (19-25 April 1991), p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Rüdiger Wolfrum, “Die Aufgaben der Vereinten Nationen im Wandel”, pp. 6-7.



playing off different allies, Arabs against Arabs, and Israelis against (nearly) all. Multilateralisation either by integrating regional forces or by getting outside agreement (and money) is not particularly new to this region. There is a fair chance to see Panama 1991 in a straight line to Iraq 1991, accommodating for local differences. US collaboration has always been tied to the condition that it would not be a UN war, headed by UN officers. It is this condition which will be the litmus test of a change in US foreign policy.

For the domestic agreement, it is, again, not the first time that UN approval came before domestic concertation. During the Korea war the UNSC resolution was voted the same day of the intervention and the US had already started two days later to ship forces to Asia. At the time, the UN could be used. Since Baker and Schewardnadse were negotiating the day of the Kuwait invasion, the US knew quite rapidly that it could rely on one superpower to get UN backing. It is not at all sure if, in slightly less clear circumstances, the US would gamble very much on the UN if its interests are at stake.

#### 4.2. Whose new world order? Trilateral diplomacy after Kuwait

George Bush talked about a “new era” in his speech of 8 August, and declared officially the “new world order” as a US foreign policy objective in his speech to the Congress on 12 September 1990. The administration’s appeal to see the Gulf conflict as the start of a new world order meant playing out the possibilities of international cooperation that the end of the iron curtain has opened for the major actors.

This is not the first time that a regional conflict would become the starting point for a new world order. Already the Korean war was discussed as the first real incidence of “collective security”. Wolfers distinguishes between an idealist version that calls for collective intervention against an aggressor for moral reasons, and a more realist version that rests on vital interests as represented by the so-called principle of indivisible peace: “If aggression is to go unpunished anywhere, it is said, potential aggressors will be encouraged everywhere, and as a result no nation will be secure”<sup>99</sup>, which reads like a statement by Bush or Baker. Yet, the War in Korea did not imply a major shift in great power policy. It was a venture of what Wolfers calls collective *defence*, to oppose what was considered the major US enemy of the time, the USSR. The UN was only a means for that end: “what was important in the vision of world order entertained by the Bush administration was the leadership role America would play, not the institutional means of exercising this role.”<sup>100</sup>

There are two incidents of US *indirect power*, i.e. attempts to use the precedent of a regional war for other objectives. The first objective is the deterrence of future regional wars, or more precisely the deterrence of regional middle powers. Since after the Cold War, the US strategic planners have been concentrating on regional conflicts with middle

<sup>99</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration. Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 170.

<sup>100</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 41.

powers, the same could apply again. It is thus the end of the Cold War that should be seen as the basis for the new world order, great power conflicts being replaced by small and middle powers challenging the US unipolarity. The change from the conflicts of low intensity to middle intensity; the attempt to defend NATO from regional hegemonies; the control of ABC proliferation are all indications of this new focus. Since spring 1990, the US military chiefs saw Iraq as a potential long-term threat to global US supremacy. When Iraq bid, the US was prepared to respond and did so vigorously. The military have interpreted the Iraq conflict in classical geopolitical terms: a hegemonic war to preempt the rise of new challengers.<sup>101</sup>

The second indirect power attempt of the US would be to impose its leadership on possible contenders. Denied of its role of defending the free world against communism, and challenged on its economic competitiveness, the conflict would reinstall military power at the high of international authority in order to cash in. The major powers of the crisis were all major military powers. The others have to pay for it. "Belle revanche des armes sur la finance."<sup>102</sup>

Yet, since these indirect power attempts have been widely advertised, power approaches expect the emergence of counter-forces to oppose the US calculus.

The predictable Southern response will avoid challenging the USA with an old-fashioned across-border conflict.<sup>103</sup> If the precedent set by this war has shown to everyone that naked aggression will provoke disastrous reaction, then, as in the Cold War, the competition between those powers that want change the status quo and the US and at least some of its allies, will use other channels. Wars by interposition or more generally civil wars will be the rule, especially since multilateralisation is there much more difficult to be obtained. In other words, guerrilla wars are much more likely to happen than before the crisis. Being tied to the status quo as in good old containment times, the US might have won another Korea to get entrapped in another Vietnam.<sup>104</sup>

In the north, European powers and Japan are, if the US policy is to be pursued in this vein, likely to counteract against an increasingly perceived hegemonic racket by the US.

The thought might not be long in forming that the United States was using the centre to order the periphery, while using the periphery (above all the Middle East) to maintain its influence over the centre.<sup>105</sup>

Thereby not only the military, but also the oil leverage is supposed to be used by the US to obtain advantages in other fields. With the NAFTA agreement that may eventually in-

<sup>101</sup> Michael T. Klare, "Obiettivo Iraq. La strategia americana nella guerra del Golfo", *Il Manifesto*, 17 February 1991, pp. 6-7.

<sup>102</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Les enjeux d'une crise", *Maghreb-Machrek* (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 13.

<sup>103</sup> Eugene J. Carroll Jr & Gene R. La Rocque, "Victory in the Desert", p. 57.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Hunter, "États-Unis: les dilemmes du vainqueur", *Politique Étrangère*, vol. 56, no. 2 (Été 1991), p. 425.

<sup>105</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 68.

clude all Latin America, the US would control the production of oil in America and Arabia. The US could take over OPEC for oil production, distribution and revenue distribution to be exchanged in particular with Japanese money.<sup>106</sup>

The counter-reaction takes different directions. Generally speaking, Germany and Japan, anticipating that their burden will not diminish, try to get some control on the foreign policy which is made with it. “No taxation, without representation.” And since the US has been not very forthcoming, this means more independent actions. *Japan*, on her side, has moved slowly toward a greater military presence. Two months after the end of the war against Iraq, Japan announced to send a small flotilla of 4 minesweepers (500 people) to the Persian Gulf. It is the first distant Japanese military mission since World War II.<sup>107</sup> In a heated discussion which provoked massive popular resistance, Japan changed the constitution to allow the sending of Japanese troops to multilateral peace-keeping abroad. To oppose its US dependence on oil production and distribution, Japan has been trying to get direct contacts with Arab oil-producing countries. 73% of its oil is imported from the Middle East. Despite attempts to raise the part of nuclear power and especially liquified gas in its energy basket, Japan will remain largely dependent on oil. Yet, it consciously changed the dependence on distribution in favour of the producing countries and their multinational oil companies: from 44% in 1980 to 63.5% in 1989. There exist also deals that should entrap oil producers with Japanese growth and aid policies. The deal would be to exchange Arab production and refinery capacity for Japanese development projects in Arabia. The “majors” are increasingly marginalised.<sup>108</sup> Finally, Japan has embarked in the most ambitious nuclear energy project of the world, aimed at constructing the full plutonium cycle. Even a country with whom Japan has good neighbourly relations, like South Korea, has officially expressed its concern about the future plutonium potential of Japan. A critique of nuclear energy expects that by 2020 Japan will possess more militarily usable plutonium than the two superpowers together ever did.<sup>109</sup>

*Germany*, on the other hand, has been undergoing the same discussion about a change of its constitution so as to allow the Germans to take part in “out-of-area” missions, as

<sup>106</sup> European commentators are producing at times the most Machiavellian scenarios of US intentions. One analysis reads as follows. The US has to honour different interests, namely the financing of their economic and military power, the liquidation of their and the Latin American debt, the financing of Russian and Eastern Europe, a Marshall Plan for Latin America or other parts of the world. These enormous financial needs cannot be met by Japan or Germany. If the US would link the control of oil to the control of other primary products, it could — via an inflationary policy — both cut the debt and put strains on those countries not producing primary products. This could be used for getting concessions from Europe (agricultural policy, civil aircrafts, and arms export control) or from Japan. See Jacques Capdevielle & Kenneth Courtis, “Le joker du Golfe”, *Le Monde*, 9 avril 1991, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “Breaking Tradition, Japan Sends Flotilla to Gulf”, *The New York Times*, 25 April 1991, p. A11.

<sup>108</sup> Philippe Pons, “Le Japon multiplie les accords avec les pays pétroliers arabes”, *Le Monde*, 31 janvier 1991, pp. 31-32.

<sup>109</sup> Chikako Yamamoto & Georg Blume, “Vorsprung durch Monju”, *Die Zeit*, vol. 48, no. 19 (7-13 May 1993), p. 26.

long as they are of a multilateral nature.<sup>110</sup> On top of this, Germany has been backing (continental) European attempts to develop a more independent stand in diplomacy. Although both British and German commentators acknowledge that the Gulf Conflict has initially deepened the difference between the UK and other major European powers<sup>111</sup>, it was a British idea backed by European foreign offices, and against US will, that has made the single most innovative policy move in the Gulf conflict: the coalition's intervention in Northern Iraq.<sup>112</sup> European diplomacies, aware of their weak stand as a whole in the Gulf conflict, might have pushed to adopt a project which includes common foreign security policy, the Maastricht Treaty. Generally speaking, it seems that the (continental) Europeans will follow the attempts to use the UN or other systems to circumscribe US unilateralism. The discussion around the Yugoslavian intervention have clearly shown both European wavering and the US caution for conflicts of a guerilla nature.

But to what extent is this attempt to impose a precedent on US foreign behaviour useful for the "new world order"? The *United States* wanted to create a precedent for the way Third World Crisis of this kind would be handled in the new world order. Yet, the argument of the precedent does not really hold: seldom in the future will all the conditions be united: the US being only exposed to one major crisis (not splitting its forces), the allied payment for US intervention, strong domestic lobby in favour, and the acceptance of US forces in the crisis area in different countries.<sup>113</sup>

On top of it, some of the alleged "lessons" which "the Gulf War" taught, can be highly counterproductive for a reasonable world order. There is, for instance, the lesson that wars that can only be fought by half-measures should never be entered into.<sup>114</sup>

The lesson that half measures should never be taken is not merely a prescription for complete victory, it is a warning against engaging in wars that may fall short of complete victory ... the real meaning of that lesson is that war is an instrument of policy only until the moment it is entered into. Thereafter it must follow a logic of its own, a logic in which all must be subordinated to complete military victory.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> On 16 May 1993, the first German troops deployed outside the NATO area arrived as part of the UN peacekeeping forces in Somalia. See "German Troops Hit Ground in Somalia", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 May 1993, p. 3. In July 1994, the German *Bundesverfassungsgericht* finally ruled that German troops could be part of UN missions.

<sup>111</sup> Theo Sommer, "Nur die Logik des Krieges? Im Bombenhagel geht am Golf die Politik verschütt", *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 5 (25-31 January 1991), p. 1, generally known for his pro-Atlantist positions castigates British jingoism during the conflict, with the exception of the Guardian, Edward Heath and Denis Healey. *The Economist* comes basically to the same conclusion. Higher British military resolve than on the continent is, however, not judged jingoism. See "Back to the bulldog stuff", *The Economist*, 19 January 1991, pp. 41-42.

<sup>112</sup> Theo Sommer, "Schöne neue Welt, nur ein Traum?", *Die Zeit*, vol. 46, no. 32 (2-8 August 1991), p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe: nuages après la tempête", p. 457.

<sup>114</sup> This luxurious position to pick and choose to engage in military conflicts only if swift and total victory can be expected is criticised by Pierre Hassner in "Plaidoyer pour les interventions ambiguës", *Commentaire*, no. 61 (Printemps 1993), pp. 7-9.

<sup>115</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 159.

Nor did it necessarily help non-proliferation if the conflict demonstrated that a country should not take on the US unless it possesses nuclear weapons.<sup>116</sup>

Realist writers are furthermore concerned about the propensity to make preventive wars which derives from the particular mix of objectives in Kuwait, namely low casualties and speedy conflict resolution, preemptive strikes with high-accuracy weapons against ABC proliferation.<sup>117</sup> Finally, one counter-productive lesson could be the impression that a US administration can go to war without ensuring prior domestic consensus: if the costs of the war are kept modest, the consensus follows.

All these “lessons” together could provide a precedent for future US intervention, which will *not* be forthcoming whenever (1) it should be really under UN command, and (2) results are not swift and cost free. At the same time, should it happen, it will be diplomatically uncontrollable because of (1) its tendency to preventive wars and (2) its propensity to conceive intervention in massive terms and of absolute victory. This reads like a nightmare for a Realist tradition that has been championing prudence and moderation like George Kennan, for instance. It is, however, a quite logical consequence of a policy that has been mainly concerned not to show again the “weakness of the powerful”, as it allegedly did in Vietnam. The power-translation has been not only be the obsession of power approaches, but also of US policy in the Gulf. On the contrary, the power feedback dynamics such a policy has on the system is on the contrary possibly very damaging to the “new world order.”

## 5. Conclusion: The inconclusive victory

A Neorealist power analysis is done in three stages: the origins, the dynamics and the feedback of the conflict (see Figure 10.2). The Bush administration successfully converted its power resources into actual influence (stage 2). The effects of its policy are however much less promising (stage 3). Critiques of the administration’s policy, including Realist writers, point out that the war has neither fundamentally stabilised the regional security complex, nor has it provided a precedent for a rational policy to realise the US National Interest. Two main lines of criticism can be distinguished.

Critiques of Realism point to the missed peace dividend after the end of the Cold War. The Second Gulf War brought an era of peace in the Third World, under UN intervention, to an end. For their work in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Iran-Iraq, Namibia, and Nicaragua, the blue helmets got even the Nobel Prize of Peace.<sup>118</sup> Some would see in the Second Gulf War the attempt of the US government to undermine the newly found credibility of the UN system. Not to wait for the sanctions to function is a way to avoid a precedent that sanctions work. “A proven ability to enforce effective international sanctions would be an enormous boost for the UN but extremely threatening

<sup>116</sup> David Campbell, *Politics Without Principles*, p. 80.

<sup>117</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 113, 162.

<sup>118</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Third World War: a political economy of the Gulf War”, p. 279.

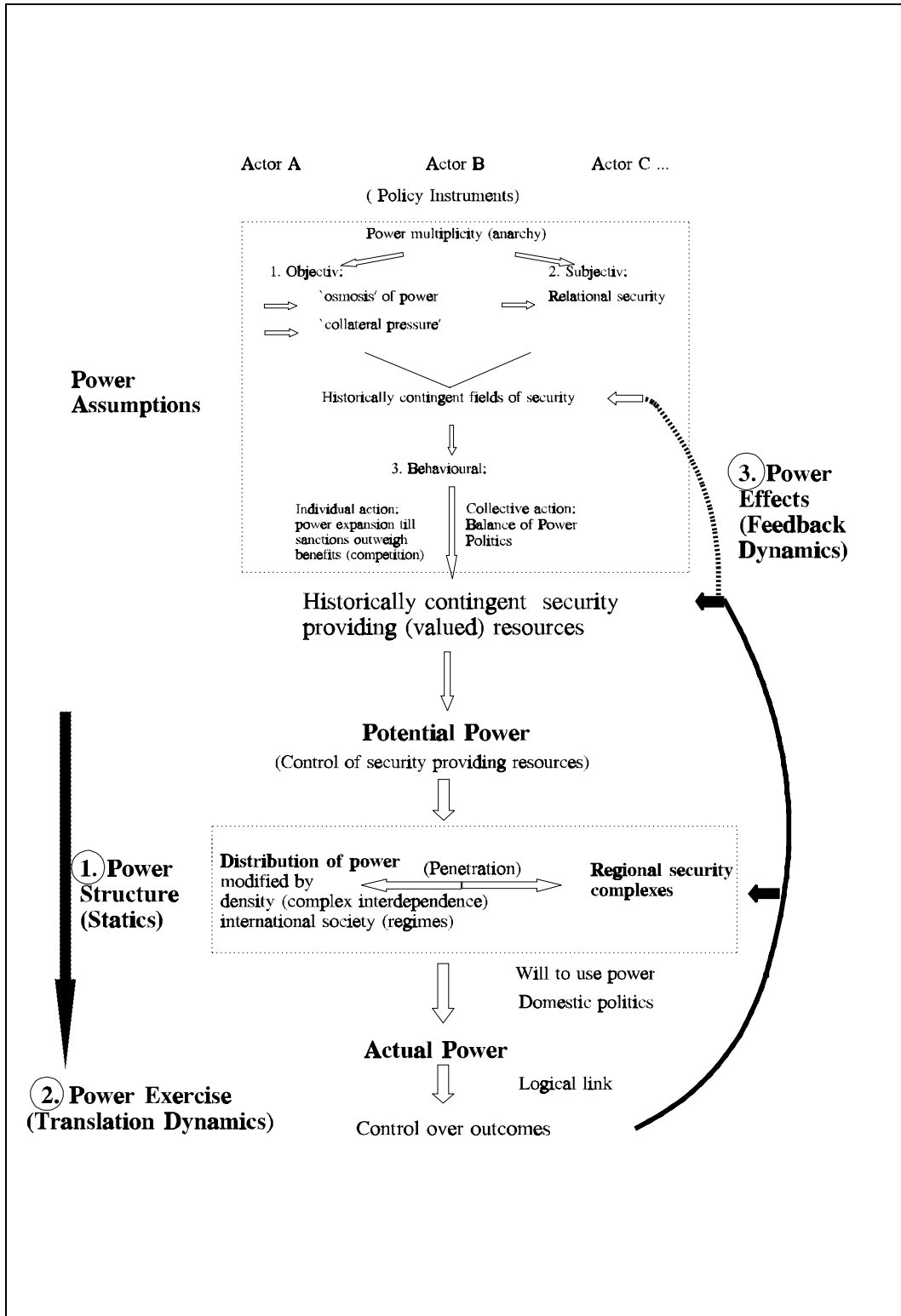


Figure 10.2 Stages of a Neorealist Power Analysis

to US interests, not least in the Middle East itself. You could say that the US coalition went to war, among other reasons, to prevent the UN becoming too effective in defending the peace.”<sup>119</sup> The disappointing feedback dynamics are no unintended consequence of the administration’s obsession to “kick the Vietnam Syndrome”, but the intended attempt to *avoid* a new world order based on a really multilateral system of conflict management.

But Realists also used power analysis as a critique of power politics. For Realists, absolute victories might be good for the national ego, but the latter is seldom a good advisor. Power is a means, but its realisation is not the end of foreign policy. The difficulty for this Realist position has always been that on the one hand it claims to be a strictly explanatory theory where the National Interest expressed in power is the guideline to understand foreign policy. On the other hand, it pursues a normative aim, that the US foreign policy should be an enlightened or long-range vision of order, anticipating the effects on the balance of power. In one case, power inevitably expands as long as it does not meet a comparable counterforce; in the other, it does not. This tension is easily understood as the result of being a Realist thinker, yet loyal to his own nation that happens to be a superpower. Stanley Hoffman’s characterisation of the US foreign policy dilemma between “primacy or world order” has been often replayed.

Realism is torn in its opposition between an explanatory theory which makes sense of international politics as power politics, and a normative theory which aims at a world of limited conflict, of managed power shifts, in other words, of peaceful change. The ideal Realist is Kissinger’s “white revolutionary”, the politician who can manage power shifts without leaving the points of equilibrium. Born in the opposition to the appeasement policy against Hitler, US Realism has become the cynic conscience of domestic politics, because it has to alert the democracies of the inevitably different realm of the international jungle. Unprepared for the power supremacy of the US, it has now to contain the unrestrained use of power for national goals, in order to establish an international system of limited conflict. This explains why Classical Realists are to be expected among the most eloquent critiques of major US foreign policy events (except for World War II), not only for its alleged idealism, but for the very accumulation of power. It seems as if the Realist statesmen (and experts) aims at a system where they can “tap” and channel the free, fluid and constant stream of world power resources, yet knowing that this system could never exist if international relations were just the state of war or following the law of the jungle, as their explanatory theory presupposes.

Thus, a Realist reads the Second Gulf War as both the perfect translation of resources into power and as the limits of perfect power politics for international security. This tension is not only typical for the Second Gulf War. For the Realist, it ultimately cannot be resolved; it is the very definition of international politics.

<sup>119</sup> Barbara Rogers, “Wanted: A New Policy for the United Nations”, p. 148.

# **Part V**

## **An analysis of governance through the Second Gulf War**



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## General Introduction to Part V

The steps of the analysis of governance do not follow as neatly the origins, dynamics and feedback of the Neorealist power account. Indeed, the non-possibility of constructing such a chronological story needs to be stressed. Initially, I had thought of presenting a parallel story to the Neorealist power analysis, showing at each step of the analysis how a focus on governance would change the story. At the start, it seemed that the two main features of governance underlying IR analyses could be neatly fitted in: the “social construction of options” points to the origins of an event and the very identity of its agents, whereas “the mobilisation of bias” would lend a particular focus to the unfolding of the conflict. A final chapter could have spelled out how Neorealist power analysis “governs” our understanding of the war and reproduces a particular disposition to approach similar crisis in the future. In this way, the empirical case would have focused the different underlying power approaches all within one story. Graham Allison reapplied.

This would have brought theories together that do not pursue the same empirical and theoretical puzzles. This is due to the simple fact that they lack an explicit explanatory theory of power. Neorealist power analysis offers a coherent approach exactly because the drive for utility/power/security glues the different steps together. Since there is no “logic of power” in approaches to governance, they will construct different stories of the Second Gulf War, in which power/governance plays a much more modest role.

Taking practices as the unit of analysis implies that there is an analysis of governance for every identifiable practice.<sup>1</sup> The two main practices of concern in IR/IPE are the practices of the international society of statesmen, and of the academic community of IR/IPE scholars — including all the possible linkages and Kissingers. But these are by no means the only ones. And when an empirical case such as the Second Gulf War opens up questions about transnational militaro-industrial complexes or legitimation processes in Arab societies, then the analysis of governance must tackle these practices on their own, in their respective institutional dynamic. Thus, it cannot follow one chronology or a unique line, however conceived, but must follow the time-frames of different practices. In such an approach, what is the status of the empirical illustration? It cannot fundamentally rely on the agents’ reconstructions that construct an event (“the war”) out of the interminable flow of things. A governance analysis will read the Second Gulf War as a particular moment in the unfolding of practices, where they meet: there is no governance analysis *of* the Second Gulf War, but an (illustrative) analysis of governance *through* the Second Gulf War.

Thus, the following chapters will not try the unnecessary, and probably impossible, namely the integration of all intersubjective power concepts into one single explanation of the Second Gulf War. It will follow their two main origins, namely IPE and post-structuralist international theory. The first focuses on those concepts of structural power which have been also concerned with the systematic international spill-over effects of

<sup>1</sup> These concepts and their operationalisation for empirical research will be introduced more precisely in chapter 11.

leading societies' practices to which other practices have to react. This implies the concern with non-intentional power as the capacity to (legitimately) export domestic problems abroad. It is more than just unintended consequences as mere externalities, both because it is about systematic and not only random effects and because these features make a difference between some actors that can (are empowered) to export their problems and others that are not. An analysis of governance will account for this feature where an individualist concept of passive power could not. The Second Gulf War provides a particular moment in the general unfolding of these practices.

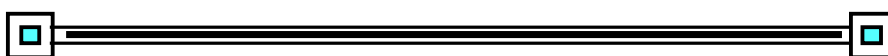
The second, more post-structuralist, account of governance is organised around two main axes: a genealogy of the practices of the international society of statesmen and a semiology of the dominant discursive practices of Neorealism. The Second Gulf War is seen here in a deconstruction of the "naturalness" of both the practitioners' and observers' dispositions. In fact, Neorealist power analysis as such appears here as a privileged power practice. It becomes the governance of the "logic of power" discourse, i.e. the way traditional power analysis conditions our understanding of contemporary history and reproduces particular political and normative dispositions.

After the presentation of the assumptions of an analysis of governance (11), this part will tackle IPE's focus on the tacit power of the strong through clashes of legitimation processes (12) and the post-structuralist<sup>2</sup> concern about the ritualised mobilisation of bias in the Second Gulf War (13), and in its analysis (14).

With regard to the understanding of the Second Gulf War, the analysis of governance will advance the following three basic theses. First, it will take off where the Neorealist security account of the origins of the conflict stopped, namely at the understanding of Iraq's domestic legitimacy problems. It will be argued that the expansion of Western state-building practices systematically unbalance legitimacy processes in the Arab world. Iraq's *fuite en avant* is only the last unsuccessful adaptation in a long series. Second, it will show how symbols evoked particular dispositions, made available by a shared collective memory, for the understanding of the Second Gulf War as an anti-appeasement crusade, and for US intransigence during the conflict. Third, having shown how Realist argumentative logic constructs our historical reading of the war, it will be argued, that this Realist puzzle-solving, whether wittingly or not, in fact disciplined our understanding, and thus the effect, of Berlin 1989. In this analysis of governance, the Second Gulf War appears not as a "defining moment", but its interpretation acts as the closing stage of the Realist and IR puzzlement with international affairs after the sudden demise of the Cold War.

<sup>2</sup> There is plethora of concepts which refer to non-positivist positions, as critical, constructivist, post-structuralist, and post-modern. "Critical" will be applied only to Frankfurt-School inspired approaches. "Constructivism" will be limited to its epistemological position. "Post-modernism" will be linked to a particular philosophical school which is based on a radical critique of the enlightenment project. For the purpose of the analysis of governance, "post-structuralist" seems the best term, because it is both broad enough to embrace the others, yet focuses on social theory that tried to avoid the pitfalls of both methodological individualism and objectified structuralism. Therefore, following this definition, Habermas, Giddens, Bourdieu and Foucault are all post-structuralist, although only the latter is (at times) post-modern.

## Assumptions of an analysis of governance



Although different in many respects, “structural power” and related concepts share several features.

Firstly, similarly to Baldwin’s relational power, they all try to contextualise the analysis of power. A focus on bargaining or on more militant showdowns is considered insufficient to explain outcomes. Contextualisation can mean the particular historical setting, the particular structures, and the particular discourses within which the action is perceived (by the participants) and analysed (by the observer).

This implies secondly a common attempt to look at systematic effects, whether they were consciously produced or not, whether they were retracable to a particular agent or not. The focus of the analysis are “practices”, which can be reproduced by structures, networks or discourses. These “units of analysis” are the crucial and delicate point for the empirical analysis.

Thirdly, they all share the endeavour to widen the scope of what is “international politics”. This is closely linked to the practical purposes of the concept of power, as Morriss analyses it. Traditionally, international politics is centered around the behaviour of states. True, MNCs and international organizations, as well as norms or regimes can be integrated, but the eventual outcome to be explained remains the behaviour of states, their conflict or cooperation.<sup>1</sup> All conceptual innovations around power share the attempt to bring to the forefront and “politicize” international practices usually considered outside the range of the discipline.<sup>2</sup> Shifting the conception of the international realm from

<sup>1</sup> For an account that integrates these features in a redefined “liberal” international theory, see Andrew Moravcsik, “Liberalism and International Relations Theory” (Cambridge: Harvard University. The Center for International Affairs, Working Paper No. 92-6, revised April 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Hoffman precisely summarises different “critical” international theory by the attempt to redefine “political space”. See Mark Hoffman, “Restructuring, Reconstruction, Reinscription, Rearticulation: Four Voices in Critical International Theory”, *Millennium*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1991), p. 170.

“anarchical society” to interlinking networks or practices that are organised transsocietally, implies the increase of the relevant actions that are to be taken as political. When Susan Strange castigates the emerging discipline of IPE for its focus on the “Politics of International Economic Relations”<sup>3</sup>, it is not because it is too concentrated on politics, but because it confuses international politics with the realm of government competences. Quite to the contrary, if power includes non-intentional and impersonal effects, if politics is to be understood as all those, also diffused, practices that affect significantly the public realm (which includes, but is not limited to the government), then the concept of governance implies another view of world politics whose relevant practices are not only those of the “international society” even widely conceived.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, most of them share certain meta-theoretical positions which are part of the post-positivist moment in IR (see Part II). This implies that the resulting analysis will in fact be less theoretical than the Neorealist one, if one understands theory as causal model-building. It requires, however, a refinement of the conceptual tools, more historical sociology and more meta-theory. After all, Foucault himself described his work as epistemologically-informed history.

The assumptions underlying the analysis of governance will be presented by starting with some conceptual remarks, followed by their methodological implications which will prepare the outline of the subsequent analysis of governance in the Second Gulf War.

## 1. Constructivism

We construct worlds we know in a world we do not.  
Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making*, p. 38.

Part II has given some indications of the epistemological assumptions of those scholars that are trying to develop a “post-positivist” research programme. There are a multiplicity of underlying meta-theoretical assumptions within this research programme. I have chosen the one which is most acceptable to most positions, but it cannot, and need not to, claim to cover all of them. It must, however, claim to be coherent with the underlying assumptions of the analysis of governance presented in Part III.

This position is called constructivism. It occupies a territory in-between empiricism and pure idealism. It does not deny the existence of a phenomenal world, externally to thought, but, and this is something different, that phenomena could constitute themselves as objects independently of discursive practices. Their thought-independent existence is not challenged, but their theory or discourse-independent observation is. What counts as an object or an event, is always the result of interpretive construction of the world out

<sup>3</sup> Susan Strange, *States and Markets. An Introduction to International Political Economy* (New York: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 12ff.

<sup>4</sup> Put in another way: if Realism has been based on a liberal private/public distinction, where private pluralism was accepted domestically, but not in the public international realm, the blurring of sovereignty/anarchy implies the redefinition of the established private/public borders, thus, of international politics.

there. Even if there were thought-independent features of the real world, we have no way of distinguishing them.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, constructivism recalls against positivism, that observation and knowledge is no passive recording, but that objects of knowledge are constructed.<sup>6</sup> At the same time it would oppose idealism on the grounds that the principles of knowledge construction are not random, but socially constituted through established practices.<sup>7</sup>

This implies that a theory of action must be coupled with a theory of knowledge. Both can be analytically distinguished as two different practices, but cannot be separated. Whereas a positivist approach, as for instance rational choice, would presuppose no major rift between the reasoning of an agent and its reconstruction by the observer, a constructivist approach will assume that observation is always done within the reference of the observer's practice: its substitution with the agent must be problematised. Thus, in contrast with positivism, it does not assume the exchangeability of observer and agent, except as a (re)construction, whose truth content cannot, in turn, be checked via falsification against an empirical world, because our access to that world is socially constructed.

With regard to the analysis of power, this implies that its analysis must always refer to the two levels of action and of knowledge production. The empirical analysis always deploys a double articulation: understanding, i.e. reconstructing, the particular event or moment in time, *and* explanation which is done within the context of an audience, in this case, the academic community. This is the double hermeneutical position: meaning is attributed with regard to the "field" on the level of action (say, Realist Power Politics in the Gulf War) *and* to the "field" of academia (IR/IPE scholars).

On the level of action, there is still a difference to be made between the "natural" and the "social" world to the extent that power as the capacity to effect could theoretically include the "power" of hurricanes. This has been disregarded here.<sup>8</sup> It would be part of a power analysis only on the level of observation, that is the effects that a particular understanding of the "hurricane" could bring about, as for instance, a sign of God.

On the level of observation, constructivism opens up for the analysis of the social production of knowledge. If observation is theory-dependent and constructed, a constructivist approach to power must integrate a theory about the effect of theory, which, by contributing to the construction of a particular, "authorised" view of the world, is part of making that world.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making. Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> In the following, I will often use the phrase "action and perception" to reduce the heavy metatheoretical terminology. It should, however, not imply that perception is a passive registration. For constructivists, perception is already the result of the constitution and interpretation of an object. Within an established practice, the common sense makes it impossible to distinguish between the perception of an object and the "objectivation" through perceptual acts.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1980), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> I would limit "power" to the social world. But even this is arbitrary as the English use for "power" as (electric) energy shows.

Dans la lutte pour l'imposition de la vision légitime, où la science elle-même est inévitablement engagée, les agents détiennent un pouvoir proportionné à leur capital symbolique, c'est-à-dire à la reconnaissance qu'ils reçoivent d'un groupe: l'autorité qui fonde l'efficacité performative du discours est un *percipi*, un être connu et reconnu, qui permet d'imposer un *percipere*, ou, mieux, de s'imposer comme imposant officiellement, c'est-à-dire à la face de tous et au nom de tous, le consensus sur le sens du monde social qui fonde le sens commun.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the repeated reference to the reconstructions of the observers is not to privilege this part of the social world over the agent-level: it is just that the production of “authoritative” or “legitimate” knowledge is the privileged place for a constructivist analysis of power. It is also the reason why post-structuralist and constructivist writers repeatedly challenge Neorealism at the meta-theoretical level. Since power exists at the epistemological level, positivism with its claim to unravel “natural” or “objective” causes and regularities, is immediately perceived as the ultimate power strategy: it conceals that these “objective” facts are just an effect of a social construction and that therefore particular politics are no outgrowth of natural necessity, but of convention, even if it is one hard to change. Indeed, the repetition of the positivist message can be seen as contributing to the reproduction of these conventions and their “objective” appearance. By limiting power to the level of action, positivism underplays power in the construction of knowledge. Studying power on the level of empirical rational choices does not touch power phenomena in the very social construction of the “empirical” both in the reified concepts of social theories and in the actions of the observer.

Thus, the research programme of governance is not only about power, but must, given its constructivist assumption, itself be conceived as a power practice, as much as other theories. Before turning to the “facts” of the Second Gulf War, future historians will use these critical self-descriptions as the necessary contextualisation for understanding the identification of the “facts”, the fads and fashions of contemporary social sciences — including those “critical” self-descriptions.

## 2. Intersubjective practices as unit of analysis

Chapter 6 proposed a power analysis with a dyad of concepts, power and governance, in order to avoid some of the fallacies of structural power concepts without losing their explanatory potential to integrate non-intentional and impersonal effecting. A dyadic analysis is united by the search for capacities to effect, whereby *power* as a concept linked to the agent refers to the capacity to transform resources that affect social interaction and *governance* refers to the capacity of intersubjective practices to create and mobilise dispositions. Since an economic approach to power analysis must conceive of unintended effects as random and of impersonal effects as objective constraints, a power

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp. 100-101.

analysis which aims at not excluding *a priori* these effects from power analysis must be based on an intersubjective ontology which sets the frame for the analysis of agent power. Thus, the analysis of governance relies on two central concepts, namely intersubjective practices and dispositions.

## 2.1. Practices

At this point, it is crucial to specify the unit of analysis. Practices are characterised first of all by a set of patterned interactions.<sup>10</sup> This seems quite straightforward if one thinks about the two particular practices which an analysis of governance in IR will typically touch, the international society of statesmen and the community of IR academics, or in other words, the practitioners and observer-practitioners of international politics.

A second ingredient is the presence of a shared system of meaning, i.e. “community-shared background understandings, skills and practical predispositions without which it would be impossible to interpret action, assign meaning, legitimate practices, empower agents, and constitute a differentiated, highly structured social reality.”<sup>11</sup> This is already more difficult to ascertain. Common wisdom in IR is that there exists no international community worth its name. In an interesting move, Richard Ashley has argued that there exists an international community, namely the statesmen that share the Realist system of meaning. This practice is based upon a code which Ashley calls the “double move”. Here the Western political community is constructed as an ideal whose realization beyond domestic community, however, must be deferred. The effect of this double move consists in constituting the space and subjectivity of a relatively autonomous field of international political practice and defines the competent subjects as those “who not only share an abiding commitment to the Western rationalist tradition embodied in the national community but also know themselves and define their interests in terms of their locus at the historical *margins* of a rationalist order.”<sup>12</sup> Looking outward from this margin, the competent statesman defends the domestic community as a field of reason. Looking inward, he guards against the anti-historical universalism present in domestic society’s rationalist commitments and permanently checks undue transfers of the domestic order’s actions and perceptions to the qualitatively different international realm. “Himself a product of these rituals, the competent statesman is habitually disposed to resist those pressures, from whatever national locus they might spring, that would diminish the space of international community and reduce statesmanship to a mere projection of domestic society’s rationalist demands. Herein is the statesman’s interest...”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This is shared by the transnationalist literature. For the concept of “Handlungszusammenhänge”, see Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Internationale Politik. Ein Konfliktmodell* (Paderborn *et al.*: Schöningh, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics”, *Alternatives*, vol. XII, no. 4 (October 1987), p. 403.

<sup>12</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space”, p. 418.

<sup>13</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space”, p. 419.



One can therefore often approach the working of this practice in the reaction of its competent members to defend established meanings and dispositions. Part II has already presented some of the defensive dynamics of the academic practice of IR/IPE. Here, I will illustrate this point with regard to the foreign policy practice.

The importance that later writers in IR have attached to the period before and after the Congress of Vienna can be understood as an attempt to rescue practices which have come to be considered as most stabilising for international affairs. A consistent part of the post-WW II writings in IR are in fact devoted to understanding and to reproducing this diplomatic culture. This is sometimes coupled with a critique of modern diplomacy that has lost its independence from domestic politics, a critique of its democratisation, as it were. Others say that the advent of the nuclear bomb has produced pressure on foreign policy elites to “socialise” their behaviour, “thus establishing an effective international aristocracy.”<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the very idea that foreign policy has to follow different rules than domestic ones, and the careful socialisation procedures of the foreign policy staff in special training programs are indicators of an autonomous network aiming at a shared system of meaning. Kissinger’s foreign policy project, that is, the attempt to socialise “revolutionary powers” into the common language and practices of “legitimate” diplomacy, is the political translation and extension of this concern. Revolutionary orders are characterised by the fact that at least one country perceives the order as oppressive. In such an environment, “[d]iplomats can still meet but they cannot persuade, for they have ceased to speak the same language.”<sup>15</sup> The diplomatic culture is thus, for Kissinger, not only the basis for conflict limitation, but its creation and reproduction becomes the very aim of foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

This explicit struggle to socialise actors into the diplomatic culture can be seen as a form of a direct power exercise. Yet, the discursively constructed rules of the practice are imbued with the dispositions of the shared system of meaning which are naturalised.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2. Intersubjective dispositions

Governance has been defined as practices’ capacity to create and mobilise dispositions. The meaning of an intersubjective disposition and its exact link to the practices needs now to be understood.

Although Bourdieu is certainly not the only sociologist who has tried to conceptualise intersubjective practices, his approach has the advantage of being explicitly linked to

<sup>14</sup> John W. Burton, *International Relations: A General Theory* (London et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 156.

<sup>15</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Self-avowedly, this is all what Realist foreign policy can do. It is not as little as it first seems.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore also the astonishing affinity of post-structuralist with Classical Realist writers. See also Ole Wæver, “International Society — Theoretical Promises Unfulfilled?”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 27, no. 1, in particular pp. 107-111.

power concerns. Let us take it as an illustration of how to understand the dispositional concept of governance (see also Figure 11.1).

The starting point is the relationship between structure and field (*champ*). In Bourdieu, *structure* is conceived as the product of collective history. Being interested in (domestic) social systems, it is a concept linked to the system of “social difference” or stratification, or, in other words, the generative context for the establishment of status groups. Of course, these structures are posited by the observer’s practices. Bourdieu follows here the anti-empiricist line of both logical positivists and constructivists. But it is the concept that comes closest to the idea of “objective” regularities. They are the given context within which fields (*champs*) establish themselves. Fields (*champs*) are the specific contexts within which practices take place. Fields have a system of meaning which are build on taken for granted beliefs, the already mentioned *doxa* (see chapter 6), which Bourdieu defines also as the presuppositions of the field (*champ*).

Practices, in turn, are based on a field-specific set of *dispositions*, called the *habitus*.

Produit de l’histoire, l’habitus produit des pratiques, individuelles et collectives, donc de l’histoire, conformément aux schèmes engendrés par l’histoire; il assure la présence active des expériences passées qui, déposées en chaque organisme sous la forme de schèmes de perception, de pensée et d’action, tendent, plus sûrement que toutes les règles formelles et toutes les normes explicites, à garantir la conformité des pratiques et leur constance à travers le temps.<sup>18</sup>

The habitus functions like the materialisation of the collective memory. Comparable to Kuhn’s “paradigm”, it is a given disposition to act, perceive and think in a particular way. Yet, it is neither immutable, nor stable. It is just a more sociological translation of socialisation processes that take place not only on the individual level, but which characterise entire groups.<sup>19</sup>

The logic of the field also implies that the dispositions are not themselves perceived as the result of a particular history; they are, as Bourdieu says, the “forgetting of history that history produces”, or, in other words, collective memory that appears as the “natural” way of doing, perceiving and thinking things. Dispositions aim at the smooth reproduction of exactly those assumptions that define the autonomy of the field. This ‘drive/direction’ is Bourdieu’s *sens pratique*. When agents are born within or into the field, so to speak<sup>20</sup>, action appears as “orchestrated without a conductor”.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> Another way would be to approach subsystems that have an autonomous dynamic; in that respect also system’s theory can be understood similarly to Bourdieu’s approach. Fields become subsystems, *doxa* becomes the binary code on which the system reproduces itself, both reproduce schemes via which the environment outside the field/subsystem is perceived, and so on. In the system-theoretical formulation, one releases this analysis from the strong materialist basis and identifies subsystems more on the insitutionalisation of a set of actions.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, p. 113.

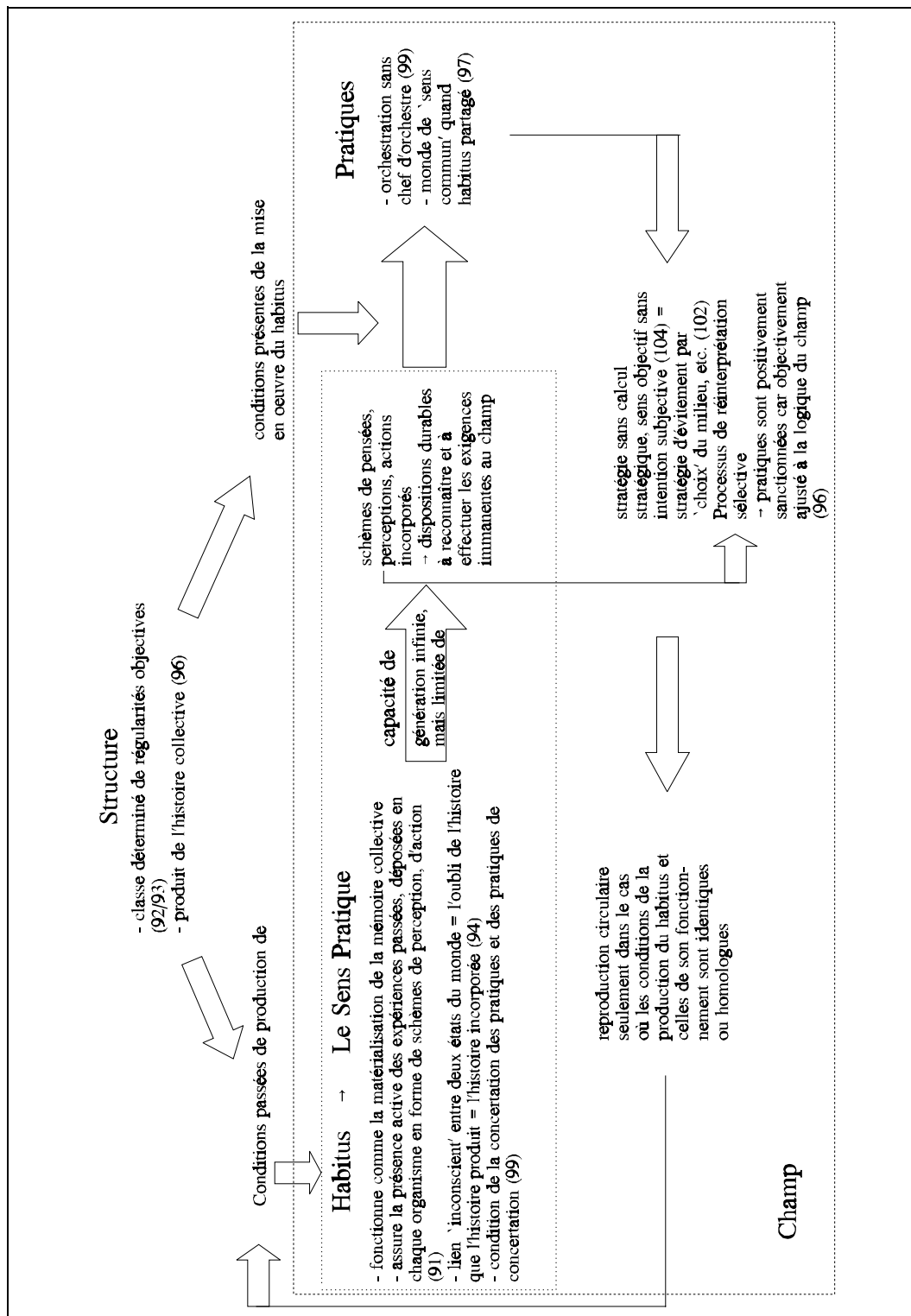


Figure 11.1 Synopsis of Bourdieu's chapter 3 of *Le Sens Pratique*.

C'est une des propriétés génériques des champs que la lutte pour l'enjeu spécifique y dissimule la collusion objective à propos des principes de jeu; et, plus précisément, qu'elle tend continûment à produire et à reproduire le jeu et les enjeux en reproduisant, et d'abord chez eux seulement, l'adhésion pratique à la valeur du jeu et des enjeux qui définit la reconnaissance de la légitimité.<sup>21</sup>

In this approach, cooperation or common action is hence not necessarily the result of choice. Practices are (also) the result of the orientations given by the habitus. More precisely, every act or practice is the meeting point of (1) dispositions of the habitus specific to the field, which for the linguistic habitus includes the expressive interest, the linguistic capacity, and the social capacity to use adequately this competence, and (2) the structure of the field as system of sanction and of specific censures.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, fields are not there forever, and dispositions even less. As Figure 11.1 shows, there are different steps at which the reproduction of the field can be inhibited. There is, first, the very passage from collective memory to the schemes of thought and action. Language is creative and even the strongest *Weltanschauung* cannot determine its use. Secondly, the dispositions are realized in a context which is different from the one in which they were formed. The bigger the difference, the greater the possibility that dispositions may change. The difference is, however, perceived again through the lenses of the field. The meaning of an action is attributed through the existing schemes. The reproduction is only circular if no perceived change happened. Finally, although less analysed by Bourdieu, there are all the interferences that can exist for the fact that the same agent is part of different fields. Here, it depends very much on the “discipline” the field (as, for instance, an academic discipline) succeeds in imposing on its participants not to “steal” and transpose dispositions from other fields (art, for instance). Hence, it depends on the degree of “autism” of the field’s ability to construct a qualitative difference to impede such overlappings.

Intersubjective dispositions that are naturalised within the logic (system of meaning) of the field are at the root of practices. This ensemble is the unit of analysis for the study of governance.

### 3. The analysis of governance

The common denominator of the analyses of governance is the unraveling of features of the taken-for-granted practices and fields. The analysis of governance tries to make those visible, because their tacit working is considered a feature of power. In a certain sense, the whole undertaking is a non-individualist account of Lukes’ third dimension. The analysis of governance must combine three levels, the emergence of fields and practices, the interrelation between practices and the inner dynamics of practices.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 14.

### 3.1. Conceptualising governance and the agent power-impersonal governance link

#### *The three facets of an analysis of governance*

The first facet is concerned with the historical emergence of fields. This typically evolves around questions of the historical “longue durée” and the naturalisation of its constitution in questions of hegemony. If we take our examples from the two main practices we are interested in IR, this level would point to the crucial moment of the emergence of the modern state system as the background on which modern diplomacy as a practice should be understood. If the conditions of its emergence then are not the same now, attempts to reduce international politics to an unchangeable diplomatic practice or to deduce ahistorical recipes about it, will appear as possible closure moves of a field (diplomacy) that wants to defend itself from disturbances.<sup>23</sup> For the practice of Realist diplomacy, the context of the Cold War appears now to have been crucial for its development. Again, structural changes can challenge pre-established dispositions and, in turn, makes their mobilisation visible as “purposeful” to close them off the field. That this crisis is visible implies already that the field has difficulties in reproducing itself unchallenged.

The second facet touches on the relationship between fields, that is, the question how the very existence and reproduction of self-sustaining networks can have an effect on another. This includes questions of assessing the extent of communicative closure (autism) or, on the opposite, the dependence of some practices on others to reproduce themselves. It can also touch the question of the doxa of one field undermining the silence of the doxa in another. Here, the functioning of a practice can be in a crisis, because its doxa has become visible through the boundary transgressive effects of other practices; effects that are unintended, resistant and disabling.<sup>24</sup>

The third facet touches the mobilisation and dynamic reproduction (or not) of dispositions within one field. This latter implies three steps, namely the assessment of existing fields and dispositions, their mobilisation in practices under particular conditions, and the creation or reproduction of dispositions.

#### *The governance - power link*

The link between governance and agent power is made through dispositions. Whenever the concept “disposition” arises in an intersubjective framework, it refers to dispositions whose bearers are agents, although the significance is that they are shared by the participants in a particular practices, and that their “enactment” is looked at from the practices’ point of view. This does not mean that one cannot switch to the agent point of view. If from the level of practices, governance is the practices’ capacity to create and mobilise dispositions, from the agent level, it is best understood as their *ritualised dis/empowering* to which their actions contribute, whether wittingly or not. They acquire

<sup>23</sup> This is an important part of R.B.J. Walker’s research programme on sovereignty.

<sup>24</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “Imposing International Purpose: Notes on a Problematic of Governance”, p. 273.

practical competence. The practices' reproduction cannot be adequately understood without reference to the participants' competent understandings and skillful deployments of cognitively-structured practical schemes, dispositions, or rituals of power.<sup>25</sup> That sounds like an individualist account. Yet, the important point of an analysis of governance is not that there are agents and structures, or that whereas individualist approaches prefer the one as a unit of analysis, governance privileges the other. The point is that in an analysis of governance, understanding agency presupposes understanding of the practices, in which action takes place and is understood (by the co-agents and by the observer). Moreover, these practices have an ontological status of their own, not reducible to individualist action, not even over time, as the individualist solution proposes.<sup>26</sup>

By linking up governance with agent power from the agent perspective in an inter-subjectivist account, there are at least three ways in which practices can dis/empower an agent's dispositions.

Firstly, governance analysis will touch the social construction of the identity of the agent. This is the part of the concept of governance most inspired by Foucault. Just recall the example about naming a state a "Third World" state (see chapter 6), which mobilises particular dispositions and enframes the so-identified actor in a set of pre-given understandings. The way a discourse/practice will "institute" the available roles can limit or expand the agent's possible or "authorised" actions and indeed makes them intelligible to the co-agents and to the observer. One can also apprehend this idea through the concept of legitimacy, or the systematic (dis)entitlement to act. Governance is different from authority derived from conscious consent: it is not done by an act, but is constituted by the daily practices.

Secondly, governance analysis will approach the social construction of "thinkable action" for the agent defined by the first step above. This implies again a post-structuralist concern about the "naturalisation" of institutions and the historical construction and intersubjective reconstruction of the "taken-for-granted" or practical world. Although the analysis inscribes agents and actions into the internal logic of discourses and practices, it can focus on how discursive and practical dispositions are constantly "mobilised" in action, on the level both of the observed and observing agent.

Thirdly, governance analysis can mean the systematic furthering of capacities. This can imply the relatively obvious case that the setting up of a system channels systematically (power) resources to an actor, both by reproducing the distribution of these resources *and* by reproducing the attribution of power to them. This can also be applied to what Peter Morriss describes as "latent abilities".<sup>27</sup> If power is the capacity to effect a disposition, latent power is the capacity to acquire a disposition. Having the capacity to

<sup>25</sup> Richard K. Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space", pp. 424-425.

<sup>26</sup> This leads to the problem that fields define their agents. What appears as one agent on the individualist account, say the "US administration", is part of different fields which might identify it differently.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Morriss, *Power: A Philosophical Analysis*, pp. 57-59.

speaking Russian is a capacity that can be effected under some conditions (for instance, not if one is bailed). Having the (latent) capacity to acquire the capacity to speak Russian can be effected under other conditions, as for instance, the presence or lack of a Russian teacher. Governance as the systematic effect of practices which results in channelling resources to dis/activate dispositions can be applied to both.

### 3.2. Two research programs

Both IPE and post-structuralism have evolved around a reconceptualisation of power. It is at this point that we split up the conceptual communalities to point to different empirical research projects. With the three facets of an analysis of governance just mentioned, two research programs can be delimited. Both contextualise the practices' origins and borders (first facet). Yet, whereas the IPE research program is more concerned with governance *between* practices (second facet), post-structuralists focus more on governance *within* practices (third facet).

#### *Communicative power and the transnational IPE research programme*

Karl W. Deutsch's approach to the concept and study of power shows many affinities with what could be called the IPE research program of governance. Deutsch approaches power as the capacity of a person or organisation (both cybernetically understood) to impose an extrapolation or projection of its inner structure on its environment. Power as "gross power" should be understood as the potential capacity of a system, which acts according to its inner program, to effect changes in its environment; "net power" being the difference of this (potential) capacity with the potential externally-induced changes on the inner program. Powerful are those agents that can afford not to learn.<sup>28</sup>

This research program of the interlocking of different practices has actually two sides: (1) on the "sending side", the just-mentioned projection of practices, but also the self-referential reproduction of practices which has a systematic inertial effect on other practices; and (2) on the "receiving side", the systematic disturbance of the reproduction of practices by others.

The focus on the "sending side", in which the sender is often not aware of its effects, is again informed by the theoretical discussions of the 1960s and 1970s. It evolved around such items as (domestic and increasingly transnational) militaro-industrial complexes which produces outside effects on the practice of diplomacy, or also the "autistic" reproduction of the politics of deterrence, where one particular diplomatic practice managed to close itself off from outside interferences. This last example will be used for

<sup>28</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1966), chapter 7. After these innovative communicative ideas, Deutsch continues, however, by developing the concept of power along Parson's line as a means of exchange, analogous to money, between the political and other social subsystems.

illustrating the approach. It is useful also for the practice it describes, namely Cold War superpower relations. The change of this practice had been identified as one origin of the conflict in the power analysis - and will later play a central role in the analysis of governance through the Second Gulf War.

The difference between a traditional (individualist) and a communicative understanding of the dynamics of the arms race can illustrate what an analysis of governance would look like. The explanandum, the spiral and escalation of arms race is unquestioned: it was a qualitative arms race, characterised by expanding military research, industries and the organisation of ever wider parts of the society with regard to its "necessities" (at least during the Cold War). For an interactionist approach, arms race is derived from the security dilemma which produces increasingly shorter cycles of obsolescence and an inflation of modernisation. Given the unavoidable international anarchy, the research programme is to study how perceptions are formed, intentions mutually understood, systematic psychological misperceptions to be avoided.<sup>29</sup>

A communicative approach starts from the self-referential characteristic of practices. Deterrence is an obvious case in point. Deterrence is tendentially based on "worst-case"-thinking, because there is no assurance that the "other" will not use any weakness, if it is offered. Yet, the never ending "gaps" that the deterrence discourse finds are not the mere product of technological changes, but the result of the very premises of deterrence practices: if one gap was left unfilled and the enemy would *not* use it for its advantage, it would imply that it was not deterrence which was responsible for avoiding the conflict. The very credibility of deterrence would be undermined. Deterrence theory survives only via the expectation of the worst-case.<sup>30</sup> Hence, the legitimation of its policies relies on the mobilisation of *Feindbilder*, symbols that produce a strong picture of the other as an enemy, which, in turn, influence the conflict expectations. This accentuates a tendency to overperception of conflict potential, overreaction on events potentially signalling conflict, and again the overdesign of the worst-case. Deterrence policies *dispose* for a particular stereotyped understanding of the world which reproduces autonomously the perceptions of threats. Thus, the arms race is not an action-reaction between perceptions/actions of agents but the product of self-generated moments of inertia and autonomously produced threat-perceptions.<sup>31</sup> Escalation is less a collective action problem of individually rational

<sup>29</sup> See the still impressive work by Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>30</sup> Constructivists were attracted by the way perestroika undermined the reproduction of the Cold War deterrence logic. The Cold War was also a "what deterrence practices made of it". This implies, of course, also that if worst-case thinking might be called functional to legitimacy of deterrence theories, it is not therefore that actors "choose" to think in these terms in their own interest: dispositions (worst-case thinking) are reproduced through the common discourse (deterrence) which is neither immutable, nor reducible to individual choices.

<sup>31</sup> The stress that one's action is always a reaction on the other, and not as a self-reproduced disposition, is politically understandable at the time. It is less clear why it should have dominated so strongly the theoretical debate. See Dieter Senghaas, *Rüstung und Militarismus* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 59.



agents, and more an inertial effect. Super-power relations were decreasingly the product of their interaction and increasingly the result of the juxtaposition of their internal dynamics.

This extreme closure (which is not necessarily the case for all practices!) has been called “autism”<sup>32</sup>, i.e. a pattern of communication which is not only self-referential, as practices generally are, but has an inbuilt logic which makes adaptation to the environment extremely difficult. Expressed the other way round, when dispositions clash with the context of their application, it is not not the dispositions, but the perception of reality that is adapted. In our conceptualisation, this would imply that the schemes of perception generated by intersubjective dispositions, are so dominant in the reproduction of dispositions that they cancel out even major differences between present conditions of practices and the ones sedimented in the habitus. In cybernetics, this would be considered a learning pathology. The analysis of governance enters when this practice can be reproduced *despite* its closure, that is, for its capacity to afford not to learn and to export adaptation to other practices.

Yet, these practices would not be enacted if there had not been the development of social groups linked and dependent on the practices of deterrence, as politicians, academics and military lobbyists alike. The “tacit power of the strong” should be seen in the damages this autistic deterrence practice has produced, for instance, in terms of resource distribution taken away from civil to military sectors, or the export of the super-power competition to other parts of the world. The target might be the enemy, but the recipients are many more. With this communicative rereading in mind, Kissinger’s description of superpower relations during the Cold War is even more to the point

The superpowers often behave like two heavily armed blind men feeling their way around a room, each believing himself in mortal peril from the other whom he assumes to have perfect vision. Each side should know that frequently uncertainty, compromise, and incoherence are the essence of policymaking. Yet, each tends to ascribe to the other side a consistency, foresight, and coherence that its own experience belies. Of course, over time even two armed blind men in a room can do enormous damage to each other, *not to speak of the room.*<sup>33</sup>

There is another feature which is particularly important for the study of the Second Gulf War. The more autistic the practice, the more stable the construction of the other. In the *Feindbild*, the fixation is on an enemy - whoever. Its content can change quickly if only the particular “we-them” distinction is upheld. Foreign policy practices as part of identity-constructions will be an important subsection on the Second Gulf War. The end of the Cold War has rendered visible dispositions acquired in other times. Some of the dynamics on the US side can be understood this way. In the next chapter, the analysis of governance

<sup>32</sup> Dieter Senghaas, *Rüstung und Militarismus*, in particular pp. 38-62.

<sup>33</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), p. 522, italics added.

focusing on the “sending side” will therefore be illustrated by the effects of identity-building practices in the US.

The second part of the research program, the “receiving side” is well known through dependency theories. It was already touched in chapter 6, and does not need long introduction here. Communicatively-conceived power would, however, mean that only those practices/identities can be considered dependent whose reproduction is systematically linked to the dynamics of other practices.

capitalist accumulation in dependent economies does not complete its cycle. Lacking ‘autonomous technology’—as vulgar parlance has it—and compelled therefore to utilize imported technology, dependent capitalism is crippled ... It is crippled because it lacks a fully developed capital-goods sector. The accumulation, expansion, and self-realization of local capital requires and depends on a dynamic component outside itself...<sup>34</sup>

This comes close to the detrimental “spin-off” effects that Galtung describes in his theory of imperialism.<sup>35</sup> These effects are intra-actor, and not inter-actor effects. The link with Deutsch’s approach is exactly in the reproduction of the lack of learning capacities in dependent societies.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, this “tacit power of the strong” can also be understood as a non-individualist account of Friedrich’s law of anticipated reactions where the link would not be from agent A’s (imputed) intentions to agent B’s behavior, but to one practice that systematically reacts and anticipates another practice’s *sens pratique*. One would leave the initial economic formulation by dependency theorists to include all potential issues on which practices have systematically incorporated an initially external reference. If the (initially Western) society of statesmen might at best take into account what their fellows do, this entire practice will be imported as given reference into other practical contexts. There is no Arab politics which can do without the reference to Western ones, whether approvingly or not. This inbuilt asymmetry is the object of the “tacit power of the strong” which will be dealt with when treating the nation-building processes in Arab societies.

#### *Power/knowledge and the poststructuralist research program of governance*

The post-structuralist research programme of governance, as it is constructed here, is concerned with practices’ capacity to mobilise and reproduce dispositions *within* a given field. It has concentrated particularly on two practices, namely the international society

<sup>34</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “Associated-dependent development: theoretical and practical implications”, in Alfred Stepan (ed.), *Authoritarian Brazil. Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 163.

<sup>35</sup> Johan Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Imperialism”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1971), pp. 86ff.

<sup>36</sup> For a general discussion of Galtung’s concept of “structural power”, see Pekka Korhonen, *The Geometry of Power. Johan Galtung’s Conception of Power* (Tampere: TAPRI Research Reports, No. 38, 1990), pp. 112-155.

of statesmen and the academic community of (Realist) IR. There are three different facets of such an approach. One is concerned with the emergence and given logic of a field. The second treats the capacity of the habitus to mobilise existing dispositions, be they actions or perceptions. This refers to the idea, as often heard as only abstractly treated, of “structures” (which here will be understood as intersubjective practices) as being enabling and not only constraining. Finally, a post-structuralist analysis of governance will inquire if and how those dispositions will be reproduced, or indeed, if the practices are to survive as an autonomous set of interactions with a shared system of meaning.

The emergence of the field as a first step of this research programme returns to the deconstruction of the standardised “origin” of international politics. It is a questioning of the philosophical and practical foundations of thinking and doing international politics as such. It reopens questions about the borders, that is, about the identity of the practices. Sovereignty has been at the center of the practice and theory to define and demarcate international politics and IR, its deconstruction one necessary starting point of poststructuralist analysis. Then, the analysis of governance tackles the organisation of the field. This sociology of knowledge includes some Kuhnian ideas of paradigmatic thinking (see also Part II). It looks at the historical emergence and the sociological analysis of the practices, that is, of the way academic “experts” and diplomats are selected through particular socialisation, education, material and social rewards. Thus, the empirical analysis of this step is not directly linked to current events as the short moment of the Second Gulf War in their reproduction. It just generally applies to the production of knowledge in IR and not only to the analysis of the Second Gulf War.

The second step, the mobilisation of existing dispositions, is, empirically speaking, the most interesting part, if empirical analysis has to be focused through one event. Empirical analysis must identify how dispositions were enacted during the Second Gulf War. It is here that the language becomes filled with references to the “power of...” symbols, rituals, myths, metaphors, and images and which have given poststructuralist its linguistic connotations.<sup>37</sup> Although the linguistic input is undeniable, I will construct it around its more anthropological dimensions which are more closely linked to concerns of power. The empirical research programme here can be more closely focused. Applied to the practice of statesmen, the analysis would touch the mobilisation of collective memory during the Second Gulf War. Different “scripts” have been mobilized, not always consciously, as for instance the World War II memory around the symbols like Hitler and appeasement, or the Vietnam memory. A governance analysis would understand them not just as means for propagandistic aims, but interpretive devices that help agents (and observers) to make sense of the events, indeed to an extent that they govern perception and construct the way reality is seen. Applied to the practice of the expert observer, the Second Gulf War has mobilized the disciplinary debates that structure Realist IR: the just

<sup>37</sup> The definition and operationalisation of these concepts will be given at the moment of the empirical analysis.

war debate, the isolationist-interventionist debate, and indeed, the puzzles in the translation of power, that Neorealist analysis produces itself. The Neorealist puzzles are the empirical mobilisation of the analytical dispositions in the field of IR.

The third step investigates the reproduction of dispositions, which, in cases where the reproduction does not work, can even threaten the functioning of the field as such. Many of the poststructuralist normative concerns are located exactly here: trying to influence the working of the practices by deconstructing concepts, modes of thoughts and actions. This can be done, for instance, by such a close hermeneutical rereading of traditional concepts that they are “contaminated” for future usage in the discipline (and in politics), disturbing the harmonious, self-assured, standard-discourse of Realism, and becoming thereby vectors of change.<sup>38</sup> In a sense, power analysis here will be done with a similar aim in mind. By analysing openly the Neorealist power analysis as a practice of power itself, one questions the easy reinscription of the Second Gulf War as a paradigmatic case for postivist Realism. The analysis of governance of the Second Gulf War should show not only how power can be differently conceived and made useful for analysis, but how the interpretation of events as a practice of legitimation is always an incidence of power. It is “an arbitrary political construction that is always in the process of being imposed.”<sup>39</sup> The same applies, of course, for governance.

<sup>38</sup> Ole Wæver, *Beyond the 'Beyond' of Critical Theory* (Copenhagen: Centre for Conflict and Peace Research, Working Paper 1/1989), pp. 1-2, 89.

<sup>39</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique”, *Millennium*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1988), p. 229.

# 12

## The clash of legitimation processes



Methodologically speaking, this chapter presents the research program of governance at the second facet just outlined, namely about the interlocking of different practices. It has two sides: (1) on the “sending side”, it tackles the question of whether self-referential reproduction of practices has systematic (inertial) effects on other practices; and (2) on the “receiving side”, it treats the systematic disturbance of the reproduction of practices by others. Empirically, the research focus of the analysis of governance in this chapter could be described as the study of the external effects of impersonal processes of legitimation.

The analysis of governance starts not with given agents, but with the giving of agents, namely with their identity formation and systematic provision of endowments. Agent’s dispositions are created and/or enscribed and only then appear in the individualist power analysis. Governance analysis wants to show how practices can systematically dis-/empower: it wants to reapprhend the taken for granted starting point of power analysis.

The result is an account in which the triggers of the Second Gulf War are apprehended in a different way. On the one hand, an analysis of governance investigates if practices can be found that (systematically) reproduce the societal weakness and consequent permanent threat to legitimacy in Iraq, or Arab countries in general. On the other hand, it views the US trigger through the practices of US-identity formation, within which foreign policy plays a central role for the construction of the “other” and thus for the “self”. Here, the massive military answer appears not so much as a quest for security, but as an adaptation to the end of the Cold War where an identity-providing enemy has gone missing and the reproduction of established practices has been threatened.

### 1. The Legitimacy Problem in Changing Arab Societies: Iraq’s *fuite en avant* reconsidered

Iraq’s *fuite en avant*, its precipitation into the Gulf Conflict, is only the most recent instance of an endemic political legitimacy crisis in Arab societies. Yet, in order to

understand such legitimacy problems, approaches in political economy have been extended to studies of historical sociology and state-building. A research focus on governance introduces a shift from the concern of political security or stability to legitimacy.

### 1.1. From stability to legitimacy: the shift in focus

Domestic insecurity in [weak] states will be high by definition. That insecurity will spill over into regional relations. Domestic instability makes stable relations with neighbours difficult. (...) The insecurity dynamics of weak states can be seen operating very clearly at all levels (domestic, regional, global) in the Gulf and the Middle East. This region, and others, demonstrate that anarchy cannot provide security unless the units themselves are stable. The security character of the system, and that of the units, cannot be separated. (...) The problem is that we have no firm knowledge about how to instill the process of development in places where it has not happened naturally ...

Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, pp. 154-156.

The underlying paradigm for the usual understanding of legitimacy problems in the Third World are derived from modernization theory in its revised version presented by Samuel Huntington.<sup>1</sup> He shares the starting point of analysis, that is, the focus on the impact of socio-economic modernization on political development. Yet, whereas the initial modernisation theories saw a close link between social modernisation and more pluralistic political systems, Huntington insists that there is no necessary link between socio-economic development and political stability. “Modernity breeds stability, modernization breeds instability.”<sup>2</sup>

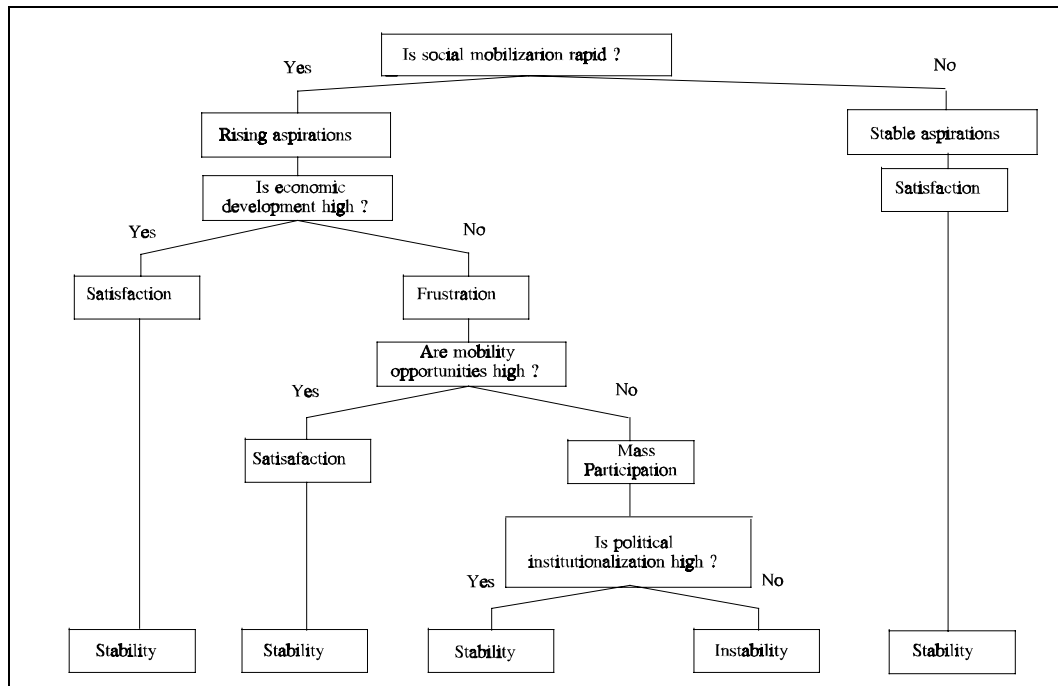
The destabilising effect of modernisation lies in the increased division of labour and the concomitant multiplication of social forces, that have to be accommodated in society. The “gap” between the two changes, social mobilisation and economic development, “furnishes some measure for the impact of modernisation on political stability.”<sup>3</sup> This is the basis for the famous “gap-theory” which explains domestic instability by the gap between rising expectations/aspirations and economic, social and political performance.

For Huntington, political stability can be achieved, if the rising expectations are met, first on the economic level; if not there, the resulting social frustration can be met with rising socio-economic mobility opportunities; if this does not happen, social frustration will turn into political participation, which must be met by political institutionalization.

<sup>1</sup> See also Part IV, chapter 10 where the feedback dynamics on the regional security system were often done with this implicit reference.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, p. 53.



**Figure 12.1** Huntington's gap theory (taken from: Lee Sigelman, "Understanding Political Instability. An Evaluation of the Mobilization-institutionalization approach", p. 212).

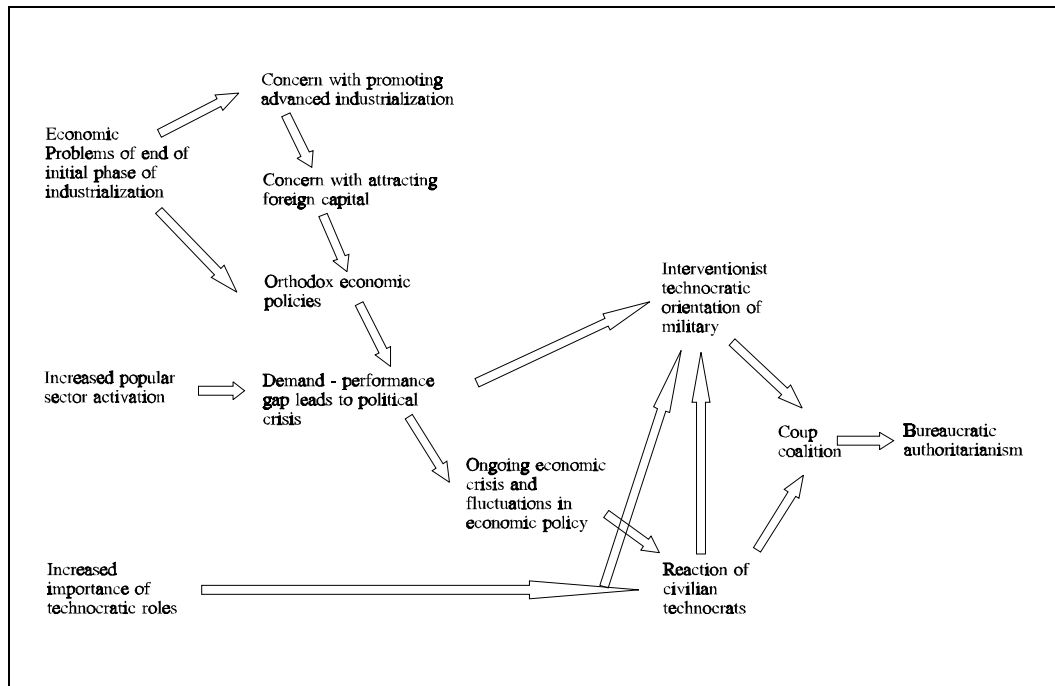
If not, political decay follows (see also Figure 12.1).<sup>4</sup>

Some dependency approaches dwelled upon and developed this analysis. Structural power in the dependency tradition is concerned with the systematic weakening of developing countries brought about by market structures or the international division of labour. An analysis of governance would try to understand how the practices of international capitalism interfere with or are adapted by processes of legitimation in state-society complexes. Therefore traditional dependency approaches have to be complemented by studies that focus on the endemic creation and mobilization of legitimacy processes.

This rephrasing of Huntington's approach, giving it a dimension of international political economy has been already attempted by Guillermo O'Donnell's model of *bureaucratic authoritarianism*. Like Huntington, O'Donnell understands political crises as a reaction to a demand-performance gap, but includes those constraints to which late developing countries are exposed in their attempt to catch up. It refers in particular to the difficulty arising after the end of the first phase of industrialisation (and import substitution), the so-called *deepening* process (see Figure 12.2).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This presentation cannot do justice to the elaborateness of Huntington's empirical argument.

<sup>5</sup> The figure is taken from David Collier, "Overview of the Bureaucratic Authoritarian Model", in David Collier (ed.) *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 28.



**Figure 12.2** Selected elements of O'Donnell's argument concerning the emergence of bureaucratic authoritarianism

When an economy passes from the import-substitution of light industries to the autonomous production of consumer durables and intermediary capital goods, so the *deepening* argument runs, developing countries are faced with a dilemma. Either they avoid dependence on foreign capital by opting for autonomous development, risking, however, involvement in a long-term and insecure project. This strategy has not proven particularly successful. Its main result has often been the protection of domestic elites. Or they take the “shortcut” of relying on imported technology and capital. But then they put a series of strains on traditionalist populist policies. There is first the need to acquire foreign exchange to pay for imports, as well as guaranteeing a positive business climate for foreign investment to provide the necessary technology. The government would need, furthermore, an efficient fiscal system to provide the resources for intervention, then a policy of export promotion, of exchange rate stability, possibly with a foreign exchange surplus, maybe linked to trade liberalisation to attract foreign capital. All this forces the use of the budget for the selective cooptation of social groups, which in the absence of a “legitimate” distribution policy, often proves to be the typical rule of government coalition in praetorian societies. Thus external constraints in domestic stalemates produce irrepressible demand-performance gaps which often are only resolved by military coups and prolonged military rule.

This framework of analysis indicates how the interaction of the international system with state-society complexes can produce a permanent state of disequilibrium. In other



words, the concomitant effect of these two processes systematically undermines the creation of a viable social contract. The domestic legitimization processes get “trapped”. On the “receiving” side, legitimization is questioned, and the underlying practices weakened. Thus, the international economic system, as it works today, is placing constraints on Iraq, as on other developing countries, that foreclose several of its options.

### 1.2. The Social Construction of Arab Political Legitimacy

Social mobilisation can undermine political legitimacy only if the adaptation of value-systems does not succeed. This also presupposes a particular understanding of legitimacy. Hudson defines it “as the extent to which leadership and regimes are perceived by elites and masses as congruent and compatible with the society’s fundamental myths—those ‘value-impregnated beliefs’ (as Robert MacIver puts it) that hold society together.”<sup>6</sup> Consequently, he follows the modernisation theory’s general thrust that legitimacy problems arise in times of rapid social mobilisation. The intersubjective approach underlying governance, however, sees legitimacy as reproduced not only by conscious acquiescence. To use the words of the definition, it is not the conscious perception of congruence between regimes and values, but the taken-for-granted identity between regimes and values that is important for the legitimization of a regime.

Aware of the risks of cultural reifications, the study of governance would point to the cultural adaptation problem in particular in Arab societies which have been exposed to the influence of Western military power and ideas. The reproduction of their cultural practices have since then become inextricably linked to the West, but have proven unable to produce a social contract that would be both acceptable in the overwhelming international society of nation-states and legitimate with regard to transmitted value-systems. Iraq’s *fuite en avant* can hardly resolve the legitimacy problem in Arab societies, although it might have stabilised Hussein’s regime, if it succeeded.<sup>7</sup>

#### *The practice of Arab politics in the context of the expansion of Western international society*

Governance analysis focuses on cases where one practice systematically impinges on the reproduction of another. In this section, the research programme consists in seeing how the expansion of Western state-building practices interact with political or state-building practices outside.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics. The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this chapter is not to discuss and analyse all different approaches to state-building in the Middle East. This would require an area specialist to provide a wider understanding of the topic. I will only show how one particular interpretation of the endemic legitimacy crisis would be accounted within an analysis of governance.

<sup>8</sup> This is a central part of the English School of IR, as well. See Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

The construction of a state structure in the Arab world did not follow the same model as in the West. There are two essential traits of the construction of the occidental state which since the last centuries both complemented and fought each other: the contractual reference which propounds an idea of a state as originating in popular legitimacy, and the reference to natural law sketching a state whose authority is circumscribed by a superior law which is even sometimes superior to popular sovereignty. Here, the state developed as an autonomous political space, independent of the Church. In the Islamic world, the state did not emancipate itself from religious rule. On the contrary, the state became an instrument for the creation of an empire for the new faith.<sup>9</sup>

The Western model has become part of the very definition of Islamic politics since the end of the 18th century. Since then, the reproduction of Islamic identity has been coupled with the perception of and adaption to Western modernity which arrived both in terms of thoughts and military domination. There have been three different attempts in the Islamic world to accommodate its identity to the “incoming” modernity.<sup>10</sup> The general thrust of the reformists at the beginning of the 19th century consisted in using the achievements of modernity better to defend the Islamic identity from the West. Islamic thinkers perceive or construct modernity as an instrument which is universally applicable by different cultures which can, however, keep their independence. Yet the perceived incompatibility of Western instruments and Islamic identity, and the increasing opposition to the West sounded the death knell of this undertaking. Since then, Islam has proposed a different view of modernity, sometimes in competition with, sometimes excluding the West.

Islamic reformism is replaced by Islamic revivalism when direct colonisation happens in Egypt or Tunisia. In that context, imitation is neither possible nor desirable. Islam is constructed as a civilisation, thereby reasserting the monism of Islamic thought.<sup>11</sup> Since the second third of this century, the Islamist wing has radicalised the revivalist position. In this case, the Islamic troubles are seen not as an effect of the impossible imitation, but of the very intention to imitate. Not only is there no universal modernity, but those who aspire it are responsible for the Islamic defeat. Fundamentalist political theory is constructed on its rejection of the Western model and ends up in an anti-Western political practice which reinforces its identity. The politisation of Islam or Re-islamisation of politics is not a new phenomenon but an answer to both a failed occidentalisation (in its economic and political dimensions) and to Western domination.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Badie, *Les deux États. Pouvoir et société en Occident et en terre d’Islam* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), pp. 30, 43.

<sup>10</sup> For the following, see Bertrand Badie, *Les deux États*, pp. 85-128.

<sup>11</sup> This is also the period when the Wahhabist system appeared. For this point and a slightly different periodisation, see Bassam Tibi, *Die Krise des modernen Islams. Eine vorindustrielle Kultur im wissenschaftlich-technischen Zeitalter*. Expanded ed. (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 67-70.

<sup>12</sup> Bassam Tibi, *Die Krise des modernen Islams*, p. 65 and passim.

At the same time, Western models regained influence after decolonisation. This period mobilized the only Western political idea which had a real entrance into Islamic thought, namely the *nation*. True, the national reference has never been entirely divorced from an Islamic referent. Furthermore, the idea of the nation includes a reference to sovereignty only with regard to the foreign world and not the sovereignty of the national collectivity as in the West. Yet this idea was mobilized together with socialist or Marxist theories and policies adapted to Islamic culture.

The structural legitimacy problem derives from the (violent) meeting of the Western state-model with a political culture to which the Western discourse of legitimacy cannot be easily transposed. Following Bertrand Badie, Islamic political culture traditionally denies any delegation of authority away from the divine to human and any basis for the autonomy of individual wills (necessary for the social contract). Power (*puissance*) for the human and power (authority) for God. Necessity for the first, and legitimacy for the second; these are the two fundamental oppositions that structure Islamic culture.<sup>13</sup> God being the only sovereign, popular sovereignty is difficult to conceive. The idea of representation is not a conduit of sovereignty but often a mere source of advice. Moreover, the political system cannot refer to a national identity which it would be said to represent. Arab culture has different identity affiliations, below and across national boundaries: *asabiyya* (the kinship group), *qawmiyya* (ethno-linguistic concept of peoplehood), and the *umma* (the organic family of Muslims).

Thus, the executives cannot claim the quality of a sovereign or of a representative and are openly exposed to forms of systemic criticisms. The specificity of the Islamic case is not the conservatism of this culture or its religious background, but the ease with which human laws, deprived *eo ipso* of any legitimacy, can become a pretext for protest. Whereas in the West, legitimacy can be appealed to within the existing political system, and is often even codified, voice in the Islamic culture will inevitably appeal to a legitimacy outside the political system. Whereas the West knows a “demand-culture”, Islam knows, so Bertrand Badie’s argument, only a *culture de l’émeute*.

De facto, the social system does not distinguish functionally between state and society, polity and economy, public and private, civil and military. The always-entangled political system is challenged by pre-existing patriarchal, clientelistic and religious authority structures. The Ba’athist Iraqi leadership’s insistence on rather abstract claims to authority, based on socialism, nonalignment, and economic development, are not always enthusiastically embraced. Traditional authority symbols are still important and the regime has no monopoly of them. “One of the advantages of traditional monarchical legitimacy is that the symbols are specific to a given family or individual, while in the case of regimes legitimated by modern ideologies, opposition groups can claim to be a more authentic

<sup>13</sup> Bertrand Badie, *les Deux États*, p. 113.

embodiment of the sacred abstractions than the regime in power.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, ideological legitimacy with difficulty counterbalances traditional authority. Often, only personal and charismatic legitimation can at least temporarily fill this structural legitimacy deficit, which explains also why the neo-patrimonial state, based on authoritarian repression, remains the main state model in the region.<sup>15</sup>

Taking stock of the impermeability of the society, the political centre redirects its activities toward those functions it can satisfy without mobilising the periphery, as for instance the military. In Iraq, the present ruling elite, in defending its contested position, became increasingly tribally homogeneous. Hussein’s “Takriti-connection” and nomenclature bases its power on the military and the only party, the Ba‘th.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Dispositions of Iraqi political practice and the mobilisation of nationalism in the Second Gulf War*

Saddam Hussein’s regime can be characterised as a praetorian rentier state. Despite its undoubted importance for the preservation of a rentier structure, it is not the oil wealth which is responsible for the rentier state. In Iraq, the British *grand imperial design* had the consequence of placing regional power in the hands of the feudal lords of the time. British Protection Treaties empowered not only these lords, but their particular dynasties. They established fixed borders. With these two instruments, traditional oppositional processes were effectively curtailed, for instance the traditional right to dismiss a tribal dynasty, or to leave massively the tribe. British policy meant a territorialisation of Arab politics which enlarged the personal power of tribal lords at the expense of traditional oppositions. Those lords usually lived from a system of paid trade protection. Thus, the emergence of the oil economy only exacerbated a rentier authoritarianism based on corporatism, the satellisation of civil society and the massive use of violence.<sup>17</sup>

During the “second liberal moment” (Ghassan Salamé), the period between 1925 and 1958, the governmental (professional political) elite in the city and the land owners in the hinterland struck a bargain to divide political rule: the executive for the first, Parliament for the second. Increasingly, state-building meant the use of government structures for a systematic spoil. 58 cabinets and 16 legislative elections reflected less external constraints than struggles within an elite, more and more divorced from the larger population. The ministers and heads of governments were just reshuffled every time.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics. The Search for Legitimacy*, pp. 105/06. Legitimacy is used here in the Weberian sense.

<sup>15</sup> Bertrand Badie, *Les Deux États*, pp. 197-98.

<sup>16</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonfliktes*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Referring to the studies of Khaldoun An-Naquist, see Ghassan Salamé, “Sur la causalité d’un manque: pourquoi le monde arabe n’est-il donc pas démocratique?”, pp. 314-15.

<sup>18</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Sur la causalité d’un manque: pourquoi le monde arabe n’est-il donc pas démocratique?”, p. 322-323.

After the coup in 1958, the Iraqi regime placed an enormous importance on security and violent solutions. This can be linked to the external and internal geopolitical consequences of decolonisation: outside borders that Iraq has never recognised since its independence 1932 and internal heterogeneity with major social rifts: 20-25% are Kurds not Arabs, 60% are Shi'ites, not Sunnites.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, it met the resistance of big (pro-British) land-owners. Yet, the present Iraqi regime has been more ruthless than other Arab regimes in the region in persecuting its domestic adversaries. The Communist party, exceptionally big in Iraq, was politically liquidated by the assassination of 31 of its major representatives in 1978. The Kurd resistance has been suppressed by an open civil war since 1974 through massive deportations and resettlements, and massive liquidation including gas-attacks.<sup>20</sup>

With oil revenue, Iraq's social project became more oriented toward distribution, without increasing productivity. The oil wealth avoided external control. Iraq never asked for a stand-by agreement from the IMF exactly for this reason. It produced a form of rentier-state where the privileged groups stabilised with minimum income guarantee, health investments, family protection, the recognition and extension of women's rights, artificial suppression of unemployment through a plethoric public sector and intensive education policy. Deprived of a stable legitimacy, it is this social contract which has been threatened with the mounting costs of policing the state and the diminishing income from oil.<sup>21</sup>

The authoritarian turn of the Iraqi regime, based on a modernist and nationalist project, shows how its elite faces the kind of legitimacy problem mentioned above. The Iranian revolution has only worsened the problem. When the Iraqi army attacked Iran in the First Gulf War, not only geopolitical leadership in the Gulf region, but also the Iraqi legitimacy project was at stake. The recent fundamentalist turn in Arab politics aggravates the structural legitimacy problem. This opposition can work with a religious reference which fulfills different functions: it legitimates many forms of systemic protest to the regime, it offers a symbolic repertoire, and it confiscates a part of political decision-making and the production of norms.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, there are specific necessities to reproduce *domestic* consent (which refers to all the different Arab identity references), which have implications for daily politics, whether inside or outside the state or the Arab nation. Indeed, they alone read as the synthesis of a user's guide to a political programme in Arab countries.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Picard, "Le régime irakien et la crise. Les ressorts d'une politique", *Maghreb-Machrek* (octobre-décembre 1990), p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonfliktes*, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Picard, "Le régime irakien et la crise. Les ressorts d'une politique", *Maghreb-Machrek* (octobre-décembre 1990), pp. 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Bertrand Badie, *Les deux États*, p. 270.

The widely shared values of Arabism and Islam have given rise to certain specific, widely shared interests. These include, first and foremost, the liberation of Palestine, the last part of the Arab homeland occupied by an alien power. They include the development of inter-Arab solidarity, though not necessarily political unity, so that the Arabs will be able to protect their petroleum riches and emerge collectively as a major world power. They include nonalignment with (and no submission to) any of the Great Powers. They include, now that modernizing ideologies have become widely accepted by Arab elites, general commitments to economic and social development and a more equal distribution of wealth and power. They also include commitment to a renaissance of Arab-Islamic culture. The Arab leader or politician desiring to win and hold power by maximizing his legitimacy will try to identify himself as an effective worker in behalf of all these interests, indeed, more effective than his competitors.<sup>23</sup>

It is in this context of an inflexible political demand structure facing the government that the Iraqi triggering of the conflict has to be placed and which is the background on which the actor's identity and thus *dispositions of preferences and interests are constituted*.

Iraq's reference to nationalism during the Gulf Crisis is thus both understandable and yet insufficient to solve the underlying problem in the long run. This is linked to the ambiguity that a nationalist project must have in the context of Islamic political culture. Arab nationalism knew more success as a mode of protest against modernity (in the form of Western interference) than as an instrument of its promotion.<sup>24</sup> It can fulfill many legitimacy functions but these, coming from different backgrounds, can be contradictory. Domestically, it can coopt national oppositions; regionally, it defends against panarab movements (Nasserism, Ba'athism); internationally, it is exactly an expression of these movements in their defence against Western political and economic dependence, and of Arab culture against Westernization.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, Iraq's *fuite en avant* and the relative rigidity of its behaviour once the crisis continued to last are only another incidence of the reproduction problems of Arab political practices. This does not mean that Iraq *had to* invade and behave as it did but that an analysis of governance would understand its behaviour in terms of dispositions within its legitimation practices.

The apparent Iraqi claim to inherit the Arab nationalist mantle, with its overtones of radicalism and anti-imperialism thus had a powerful (sic !) effect on peoples and governments alike; on peoples because of their search for an integrative ideology and on governments because of their need for ideological justification. Against that background, all the necessary conditions for the crisis that ensued after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had already been long prepared. The actual event was merely a catalyst for a political evolution which had been stimulated by quite different events.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics*, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Bertrand Badie, *Les deux États*, p. 180.

<sup>25</sup> Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonfliktes*, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> George Joffe, "Middle Eastern Views of the Gulf Conflict and its Aftermath", pp. 185-86. The different events, Joffe alludes to, are, however, not exactly the same as the ones here proposed.

### 1.3. Conclusion

The second facet of analysis of governance looked at the systematic effects of practices seen from the “receiving practices’ side”. Here political economy has been supplemented by historical sociology in order to account for Arab legitimisation problems, because the practices’ shared systems of meanings and values are neither independent from, nor reducible to material constraints. Practices have a life of their own and are not just passive “receivers”.<sup>27</sup> Of the three practice-agent links in an analysis of governance, the systematic furthering of capacities appears in this reconstruction less important for the triggering of the conflict than the social construction of identity and of thinkable action.

The security account for understanding the underlying dynamics which pushed Iraq into the Second Gulf War combines ideas of legitimacy with issues of “political” security. This reconceptualisation of security is an important improvement to prior geopolitical studies. But the underlying model for apprehending political security is still very much derived from Huntington. Consequently, when security analysts define the future policies that would enhance security in the region, they propose, next to the invariable recommendations to “balance power”, a particular mix of economic development and/or political participation to mitigate the effects of modernisation and external dependence.<sup>28</sup>

Shifting away from stability, the present study illustrated the trigger of the conflict in the reproduction processes of Arab identity and legitimacy. Discursive identity practices have for two centuries included a Western referent and have been unable to reproduce themselves without systematic challenge. Political regimes and their agents have become trapped in a dilemma of choosing either an imported and prefabricated modernity which does not mobilise and which is seen as illegitimate, or an Islamism which does not succeed in seeing modernity other than negatively, and which legitimates systematic protest rather than the exercise of power. Kuwait might have stabilised Hussein’s regime, but since the problem is neither purely financial, nor to be resolved by nationalist appeals, it was just another stumble from one crisis to the next.

## 2. The tacit power of the strong: effects of superpower practices

Our way of life is not negotiable.  
President George Bush

This section will tackle this research programme from the “sending side”, by analysing if the self-referential reproduction of practices has systematic effects on other practices. In the following this type of analysis will be illustrated with two ways of approaching the

<sup>27</sup> O’Donnell himself stresses the point to base the approach on historical sociology. See Guillermo O’Donnell, “Reflections of the Patterns of Change in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State,” *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1978), in particular pp. 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> As one example among many, see Shahram Chubin, “Post-war Gulf security”, *Survival*, vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (March-April 1991), pp. 140-157. See chapter 10.

study of the Gulf War. The first, reminiscent of Senghaas' deterrence studies, but reapproaching it from an intersubjective perspective, will claim that the unexpected sudden and massive response by the US can be understood not with the sole reference to the Iraqi threat but through the way US identity practices constructed it as such. The categorisation (and not mere perception) of threats and the very conception of foreign policy is linked to questions and interpretation of one's own identity. Thus, in this reading, US action was mobilising established dispositions of tacit identity practices which provided a "powerful" *prima facie* legitimacy to US (re)actions. The second analytical focus, closer to dependency approaches or Susan Strange's concept of structural power, highlights other inertial "external" effects of apparently "domestic" practices. This will be illustrated with reference to the field of information production and the practice of *self-censorship*. It is such a perfect illustration, because it involves both the way in which agents mobilise the doxa of their field, and how a US "domestic" practice has — via the international division of information — major effects on the way the "world" perceives itself.

### 2.1. "Desperately seeking danger": the constitution of US identity through its foreign policy in the Gulf

In the life of a nation, we're called upon to define who we are and what we believe.

President George Bush, 8 August 1990  
announcing the sending of troops to Saudi Arabia

One of the rare explicit poststructuralist studies on the Second Gulf War has been conducted by David Campbell. It is inscribed into his general understanding of US foreign policy as a constitutive practice for US identity. US identity practices create dispositions which have an effect on international politics. They mobilize the practices' memory for the very identification of events, which are, in a double hermeneutical approach, always already an instance of interpretation. They also predispose to certain actions, as the search for a danger and its often personified representation, which, in turn, have to be "secured". In this respect, the Second Gulf War is an important moment in the reproduction of a US identity practice in need of adaptation with the demise of the traditional danger/enemy, or, indeed, a founding moment to find a substitute to the Cold War threat.

It is an important moment for the study of governance, because it shows how practices construct dispositions that are concealed from an interactionist approach which concentrates on action-reaction patterns. It is finally an instance of governance because the underlying logic of the practice which is responsible for the enactment of dispositions of action and perception reproduces along with its "naturalness" legitimacy for the agents and their action.

*Foreign Policy and the enactment of state identity*



States exist as a collective reference uphold and reinterpreted by practices, such as, for example, government or administration, public opinion, or shared language. Hence, states are devoid of stable (not to speak of ontological) identities, and therefore need constantly to be recreated. The enactment and “rewriting” of identity is done by political practices, such as foreign policy, which operate in their name while effacing their dependence upon representation. The representation of identity, for its very meaning, must appear as natural. Thus, “the tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed... For a state to end its practices of representation would be to expose its lack of prediscursive foundations; stasis would be death.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, education, socialisation and the staging of political symbols of the state, like anthems, flags, memorials, play a major role in the reproduction and, thus, the very existence of the state.

Such practices seek to align identity with territory, so that it becomes possible to demarcate a state. Since identity derives its meaning only through its relationship with difference, “the processes of inscription through which a political community is imagined involve numerous disciplinary practices working to contain contingency and to distance the ‘self’ from the ‘other’. Boundaries are thereby constructed, spaces demarcated, standards of legitimacy incorporated, interpretations of history privileged, alternatives marginalized, and “secure” identities established. In this context the idea of a border takes on added dimensions and different resonances, such that we can suggest a distinction between the *territorial boundaries of the state* and the *ethical boundaries of identity*.”<sup>30</sup>

Being at the crucial link between “internal” and “external”, and in the identification/construction of the “other”, foreign policy is a privileged practice for the reproduction of identity and its boundaries.<sup>31</sup> Very often, although not necessarily, foreign policy practices achieve the unquestioned enactment of identity by appealing to dangers, which are, in turn, exteriorised. What counts as a danger is inextricably linked to a self/other definition, or in other words, is part of the very reproduction of this distinction.

This has two consequences. For the practice of identity as such, it means that through the representation of danger, foreign policy helps to achieve the objectivation of the self.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the habitus of such a practice is disposed to look for a substitute of dangers to reinscribe its naturalised self.

#### *US foreign policy’s “other” and the end of Cold War*

The empirical study of the “grammar” of foreign policy practices is always imbued with the historical context within which it is done. It is always an *ex post* analysis. The

<sup>29</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 79.

genealogical approach reopens the historical struggles that are naturalized once a practice becomes established but it does not deny that this reconstruction is itself historically situated. Thus, the present problematization of US foreign policy practice should be seen in the context of the writing/rewriting of the Cold War and its end.<sup>33</sup>

Campbell sees in an apocalyptic evangelism of fear a characteristic of US identity practices, “in which a discourse of danger functions as providence and foretells a threat that prompts renewal”.<sup>34</sup> In this discourse, several agents can take on the role of the Antichrist. In all times of shaken identity, this disposition will scapegoat another target.

This target is not territorially limited. Campbell argues that with the end of the nineteenth century the identity of “America” becomes part and parcel of the state’s global reach.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, after World War II discourses of security/danger also disciplined domestic oppositional groups. War Camps for (American) Japanese and McCarthyism show that the boundaries that foreign policy drew between Americans and “un-Americans” are far from referring only to territorial borders. “Danger was being totalized in the external realm in conjunction with its increased individualization in the internal field, with the result being the performative reconstitution of the borders of the state’s identity. In this sense, the cold war need to be understood as a disciplinary strategy that was global in scope but national in design.”<sup>36</sup>

This explains also why the confidential reports on security policy in the US are replete with references to general goals or moral principles which appear as national values and guide both analysis and policy recommendations. In this reading, “containment” means something quite different. It is not only about a Soviet (or communist) threat, but an attempt to preserve, and thereby to reproduce, a particular view of the US itself.<sup>37</sup> The foreign policy constitutes an identity which must be uphold even if transformations of the object of enmity might happen. With the end of the Cold War, such a crisis of representation has happened.<sup>38</sup>

The inertial effects of established practices become visible when the “other” construction shifted. There has been first the unsuccessful substitution of the “red scare” with

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the way theories predispose to understand change in the context of the end of the Cold War, see Heikki Patomäki, “What Is It That Changed with the End of the Cold War? An Analysis of the Problem of Identifying and Explaining Change”, in Pierre Allan & Kjell Goldmann (eds), *The End of the Cold War. Evaluating Theories of International Relations* (Dordrecht et al.: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992), pp. 179-225.

<sup>34</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, pp. 171-72.

<sup>37</sup> This is implicitly acknowledged by George F. Kennan himself. He argued that it is not the Soviet “virus” which threatens the US but internal decay. The real rivalry between Russia and the US was the competition for the solution of their own respective domestic problems and for the achievement of their ideals. Hence, the Russian danger is best met by resolving the racial problems, urbanisation, education and environment *at home*, looking with interest to the Soviet mass education programme. See George F. Kennan, *Rußland, der Westen und die Atomwaffe. The Reith Lectures* (Frankfurt/M.: Ullstein, 1958), pp. 15-22.

<sup>38</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, pp. 33, 195.

“narcoterrorism” and then with continued Japan-bashing. Undoubtedly, the US administration’s behaviour showed its reactivation of existing Cold War dispositions also with regard to a quickly-identified new danger: Islam and the fundamentalist threat endowed with potential nuclear capabilities.<sup>39</sup> Despite a degree of US co-responsibility for the crisis which led to the invasion of Kuwait and for the escalation to open war<sup>40</sup>, US identity practices reproduced a discourse of moral certitude which inscribed a series of boundaries between “us” and “them”. One of the major effects of the Second Gulf War was to secure the identity and purpose of the United States and its allies.<sup>41</sup>

Lest there be any doubt that it is the maintenance of a coherent subjectivity, not rationality in the old external means-ends sense that is at stake, the commentator is explicit, and here I can rest my case for the operation of a desire whose restless quest is aimed — *through* its objects of attention — at its own constitutive identity: ‘The great lesson of how the cold war ended may be stated in words: being is superior to doing. What a nation is, is essential. What it does can only express what it is.’<sup>42</sup>

#### *Identity practices in the Gulf and effects of exclusion in the West*

Interpreting the Second Gulf War as a moment in the reproduction of practices of identity formation which are not confined to the territorial borders of a state implies not only that transgression will happen abroad, but also that the disciplining effect of the practice will be present domestically. The problematisation of the Second Gulf War for identity practices must therefore also focus on the identification of “otherness” within countries. Having mobilized dispositions of this identity practice in the building up of the Gulf crisis, the effects have been felt in inflamed exclusionism all over the Western allies’ countries. This helps to understand the strong anti-Arab and anti-Turk racism mounting during the conflict, despite the fact that Turkey and many Arab countries were part of the coalition.

Hence, one of the observers thinks that “one of the major political, social and cultural costs of this war, the present recession and the ‘new world order’, is to have fed aggressivity worldwide and launched neighbours against each other in Western, Eastern and Southern cities.” Instead of strengthening democratic political culture and institutions, the reproduction of identity via the construction of a difference that cuts across countries populations seriously undermined the democracy for the sake of which the war was supposedly fought. For Frank, this is the price to be paid for the “new world order”.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Sin novedad en el Este. El mito del ‘nuevo orden’ mundial,” in Silviu Brucan, Andre Gunder Frank, Johan Galtung, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *El orden mundial tras la crisis de la guerra del golfo* (Alicante: Instituto de cultura «Juan Gil-Albert», 1992), p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 11, 1.3. “Shortcircuiting competing diplomacies” and chapter 14.

<sup>41</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, “That obscure object of violence: Logistics and Desire in the Gulf War,” in David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds) *The political subject of violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 134. The quote is taken from William Pfaff, “Redefining world power,” *Foreign Affairs*. vol. 70 (1990-1991), p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Sin novedad en el Este. El mito del nuevo orden mundial,” pp. 58-59.

This does not mean that the link from the Gulf war via identity practices to racism and exclusionary actions is to be thought in terms of agents' intentions. This would be a typical functional fallacy to argue from the effects backwards to intentions. But it does mean that identity practices can effectively foster the legitimacy of such actions. And as such it is a moment of an analysis of governance. The question of agent responsibility is, as usual, for governance, not easily established, but this is not the only purpose of power analysis. It will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

## 2.2. The governance of information

Le propre d'un avion furtif, c'est qu'on le voit trop tard, il est déjà là. On n'a pas eu le temps de se préparer à le voir. C'est la même chose avec la technique du temps réel de CNN. On n'a pas le temps de se préparer à un événement, il a déjà eu lieu. On est sommé de l'accepter ou de le refuser. La télévision en direct est une véritable mise en demeure. On ne discute pas un image en direct, on le subit.

Paul Virilio, *L'écran du désert*, pp. 74-75.

The Second Gulf War has also given rise to revival of studies on the production of information. Most impressive was the fact that many commentators were quickly aware of the unprecedented role that media networks and satellite television played during the conflict: a CNN war, live.

These reflections are linked in two ways to a power analysis. The first is through the problem of propaganda which was already dealt with in Part IV. Here news and information are just a power resource which can be used to influence the perception of reality and the mobilisation of opinion and action. The second way to approach the problem within a power analysis is to question to what extent the medium as such is "neutral" to its users, producers and consumers alike. More precisely, the research programme would focus on the organization of the field of information production and its systematic effects. Linked to the political economy approaches of the social construction of options, it asks more specifically how modern technologies and the commercial organisation of information in the dominant production site, the US, affect public opinion and (naturalises) the writing of contemporary history elsewhere. A more poststructuralist inspired approach will then capture the phenomenon of self-censorship.

*"The tyranny of real-time"<sup>44</sup>: the powerful objectivation of live TV*

Satellite TV does not only give first-hand news; it also gives immediate pictures. The political culture of Western societies has switched from logocentrism to photocentrism. Nowadays, pictures command perception.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Virilio, *L'écran du désert. Chroniques d'une guerre* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), p. 15.

This creates a new form of journalism. Whereas before journalists were the self-conscious intermediary between data and news, responsible for their selection, they now see the pictures exactly when the spectators see them. There is no intermediate figure which could interfere with “reality”.<sup>45</sup> Hence the news consumer lives with the impression that the raw picture is closer to reality, more authentic, than the prior cut and selected one. “Live” is closer to the truth. Less comments means more freedom of thought for the spectator. But the lack of a filter, such as the journalist, means only that filtering becomes invisible, or at least not attachable to a person. “For six weeks and one hundred hours we were drawn into the most powerful cyberspace yet created, a technically reproduced world-text that seemed to have no author or reader, just enthusiastic participants and passive viewers.”<sup>46</sup>

This cannot be reduced either to a conspiracy, nor to a simple technological “constraint”, because nobody is forced to use the technologies available. But all have to live with the consequences, as in the Second Gulf War. One is that the spectators, be they professionals like the US President, or the public layman, had much less time to read, write, or even reflect effectively about the war.

Another, at least as important, consequence is what could be called the *power of noise*. Following Virilio, there is not much use of distinguishing between ‘information’ and ‘propaganda’, because active — interactive — disinformation is not to be understood as a lie. It is rather the excess of contradictory information. When saturation becomes the most important effect, then information have to be produced at high quantity. Since the overkill of information much reduces the impact of the last news, the most important is no longer to have the last word, but to have the first.<sup>47</sup> In the Gulf War, the first word was nearly always the military’s film material. This systematically advantaged a particular view of the conflict.

#### *Commercial reality — reality for commercials*

The commercial organisation of news in the country in which the major satellite TVs are located has an impact on the way information is sought, produced and distributed all over the world. The incessant quest for the high audiences, needed for the commercial financing of the networks had not only an impact on the selection of information, but also on its presentation. Form is content; it is part of the message.

Two “formal” features were especially influenced by commercial necessities, speed and “cleanness”. The first constraint seems to come from the expectation of the spectators

<sup>45</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 272 writes that “perhaps the most important to be learned from the Gulf War is the need to redefine the relationship between the media and their audience via live television, rather than indirectly via the interpretations with which journalists have traditionally informed their readers and viewers of what was going on...”

<sup>46</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 174-75.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Virilio, *L'écran du désert. Chroniques d'une guerre*, p. 134.

receiving the “first” pictures to be seen on their screens. Networks are competing with “first” news. Live reportage is a necessity and has to be organized beforehand.<sup>48</sup> Second, the story must not dissipate potential commercial suppliers. Both together constrained the field within which information was selected and sent. It was a very particular “eye” through which the world came to see itself.

The first consequence was to privilege live and/or dynamic pictures. Spectacular live pictures were rare. The first night bombings were “exciting” for the fact of the war, not for the pictures themselves. Night air attacks during the first phase of US bombing and the distance to the real front during the ground attack provided little informative pictures for journalists. It was reduced to static pictures *during and after* the whole thing happened, which are, in terms of television, relatively unattractive. Thus, the images provided by the US military were filling a “need”. As already mentioned, the military put cameras on some of their bombs and could show very spectacular pictures. The more the war went on, the more the audience was on the verge of switching back to their regular television viewing habits, the more the networks used the military tapes.

The second consequence of this commercial organisation of information is the required cleanness. The synergy of different commercial practices put constraints on the images to be sent. It is not necessarily a conscious choice to prevent particular tapes to be sent, but the overall pressure to produce a “positive” image of the war has been felt — not only in later recallings of the same journalists that somewhat found their own capacities fooled (by themselves) during the war. The war was a big commercial. 1127 US firms have seen the Second Gulf War as a means for public relations. The sponsoring included at least 60.000 Coke and Pepsi Packs, 22.000 boxes of beer, 100.000 phone cards, 5000 walkmen, 40.000 mini-compasses, 60.000 tapes, 1000 footballs, innumerable cigarettes, 100 gulf sticks and even some cross country skis. If one soldier appeared with any of these products on the screen of one of the major networks, it was \$US 250.000 worth of publicity, that is, the price of a comparable commercial.

This ad is only efficient, as long as the environment remains “positive”.

Thus, the clinical video-clip of the war suited all participants: the Ministry of War, which controls all the tapes, because it keeps the Western populations at ease and hence the war feasible; CNN and the other commercial stations, which launch embellished pictures around the globe, because the horrible-beautiful image of a horrible-beautiful war kept the advertising maecenas in good temper; the public relations people, because they profit from the war-patriotism.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The experiences of the Second Gulf War were clearly visible during the UN operations in Somalia. The invasion by US troops was prepared by an invasion of TV teams. The spotlight of the waiting journalists were blinding the troops during their landing on the beach. Military actions as night show.

<sup>49</sup> For the data and the quote, see Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, Kuno Kruse & Birgit Schwarz, “Zensoren, Voyeure, Reportes des Sieges. Im Golfkrieg triumphiert die Propaganda”, *Die Zeit*, no. 6 (1 - 6 February 1991), p. 17 (my translation).

Again, this is not to say that “big business” *wanted* the war, although some business might have done so. We are not in an intentional account. It is the collusion of their interests with the dispositions of the news management in the US that produces a particular way of seeing reality. This production of truth and its legitimacy effects are a moment of the analysis of governance.

*The preemption of alternative perception: the weapons-eye view*

The media’s disposition in the US reinforced a stress on the technical execution and the reproduction of the Second Gulf War as delivered by the official pictures. It created a reality which appeared nearly exclusively in belligerent terms through the eyes of the “clean” weapons, the “surgical” strikes. To interpret these pictures prepared by military eyes, the networks relied heavily on logistical experts, former military and intelligence personnel. War was often displayed through the sighting dimension of its killing devices. “Words became filler between images produced by gun-cameras using night-vision or infrared that cut through the darkness to find and destroy targets lit-up by lasers or radiating heat.”<sup>50</sup>

The mutually feeding practices of US news production, public relations for multiple products and the “imperatives” of real-time journalism have produced a writing of history which legitimates the strategic view of the war.

The weapons-eye view became sovereign, then, in the sense that it was authoritative, controlling, and largely legitimated by the perspectives of the subject/viewers... In short the war was described and shown by reference to the weapons rather than the affected bodies. Accordingly, violence emerges as a kind of ‘disarming rather than injuring’, and the reading of its significance is abstracted to make it appear to be a technological contest; a series of exchanges whose outcomes amount to imbalances of logistical expertise. In discursively reproducing this orientation to war, the media were rendered as linguistic dwarfs... as smaller versions of the same thinking, as it slavishly helped to turn arbitrary violence into rational action.<sup>51</sup>

It created a new consensual reality which dominated the representation (and maybe even the formulation) of US policy in the Gulf. “The combination of surgical video strikes and information carpet bombing worked.”<sup>52</sup> Hence, once the missile and video shooting started, public opinion turned around. With the outbreak of the conflict, the same public opinion which was far from being convinced from the necessity to die for Kuwait, supported by 80% the restrictions on the press and 60% wanted even more military control over the press and information.<sup>53</sup> This created a feedback pressure on the networks. Despite honest intentions to provide a neutral news management, the media

<sup>50</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War*, p. 180.

<sup>51</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, “That obscure object of violence: Logistics and Desire in the Gulf War,” p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> James Der Derian, *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War*, pp. 180-81.

<sup>53</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...”, p. 277.

became even more prisoners of their field's dispositions. As already stated in Part IV, journalists later perceived that news was made *through* them. But this not only happened for the different forms of censorships, but through the "rules of the game" which, through the setting of news production and consumption in the US, privileged a particular view over others. It is an impersonal form of effecting which is so important, because its field is the visible writing of historical truth and the legitimation of political action.

The effects are worldwide. For its unique position, the US news market has, willingly or not, effects all over the world. An analysis of governance can give no responsibility to the networks or the US government for this impersonal rule — except if they oppose any solution that would change the "rules of the game", as, for instance, the UN plans to create an independent satellite news network to make the world autonomous from US generated news.

### **2.3. The power of silence**

Almost overnight, once the war started, the silence began ... I must report that I've never experienced the kind of repression that set in once the air war started. It was not like McCarthy period - that is there were no personal direct attacks on well-known people of that kind. It was as though a great damp blanket had been laid over our country with little pinholes for American flags to stick up into the public air.

Report of the Fund for Free Expression (27 February 1991), quoted in Grace Paley, "Something about the Peace Movement. Something about the People's Right *Not* to Know", p. 72.

Self-censorship will be used as a last illustration of the inertial effects of practices coming from the "sending" side. Before handling the empirical data on various instances of self-censorship, it is, however, first necessary to conceptualize it within an intersubjective approach.

#### *The law of non-reactive anticipation*

An individualist account of self-censorship is a form of the law of anticipated reactions. This is the one border case the interactionist power analysis acknowledges. It happens when behaviour is adapted prior to any overt sanction or threat. Again, the intentionalist basis of the approach provides the solution for this account. The reaction is the anticipation of an imputed sanction, should compliance not happen. By implying this calculus within the mind of the agent which anticipates and consequently adapts, rational choice can thus reconstruct a behaviour which shows the effects of power despite the powerful's passivity. It is a border case for intentionality, because this anticipation is not strictly speaking intended by the powerful agent.



An intersubjectivist approach would not deny those instances but also conceives of self-censorship in a non-individualist way. The starting point is the field or practice in which such a self-censored behaviour occurs. Such an analysis will liken self-censorship to the through competence acquired through socialisation to behave in conformity to the logic of the field and its system of meaning. The taken-for-granted reception of an action is already a condition for the action itself.

C'est ce sens de l'acceptabilité, et non une forme quelconque de calcul rationnel orienté vers la maximisation des profits symboliques, qui, en incitant à prendre en compte dans la production la valeur probable du discours, détermine les corrections et toutes les formes d'autocensure, concessions que l'on accorde à un univers social par le fait d'accepter de s'y rendre acceptable.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, self-censorship occurs not in anticipation of one particular threat or sanction, but as the socialised and, therefore, already sanctioned behaviour of an agent who agrees to take part in a practice. In this search for conformity to the practices' inbuilt *sens pratique*, the behaviour can range from the certitude to behave according to the interiorised standards, to the anticipation of a generically negative sanction which condemns the agent to forms of insecurity, if not outright silence.<sup>55</sup>

This echoes to a certain extent other non-conscious approaches to power. So does Steven Lukes' third dimension include an idea of a form of "preempted" power which does not need any open control, because the social constitution of interests precludes "voice".<sup>56</sup> It also echoes a panoptic understanding of power, as it has become popular through the reading of the Foucault of the 1970s. There, it would be described as disciplined behaviour where the discipliner is the subject itself. Subjects, exposed to general visibility, are spontaneously playing the double role of subject and object of power. The extreme yet unrealised and, hopefully, unrealisable form would consist in a panoptic system without any external control whatsoever, a permanent state of (self-) observation, "un interrogatoire qui n'aurait pas de terme, une enquête qui se prolongerait sans limites dans une observation minutieuse et toujours analytique... une procédure qui serait à la fois la mesure permanente d'un écart par rapport à une norme inaccessible et le mouvement asymptotique qui contraint à la rejoindre à l'infini."<sup>57</sup>

Shifting from an individualist to an intersubjectivist account of self-censorship implies thus that intimidation can happen through the very functioning of the field. This intimidation is a form of governance because it can work only through the dispositions of an agent<sup>58</sup>; it is, in other words, mobilising an agent disposition which is then enacted.

<sup>54</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>56</sup> Steven Lukes, *Power. A Radical View*.

<sup>57</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, pp. 204, 228 (quote). In a sense, Foucault describes a situation where Franz Kafka's *Der Prozeß* has become "normalised".

<sup>58</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, pp. 36/37.

Self-censorship is only the empirically most accessible part of this impersonal form of power.

#### *Self-censorship through identification*

There are different conditions for judging if a case of self-censorship occurred. First, it must be shown that journalists were not seeking or not publishing particular information. Then, it must be shown that this was not due to reasons of journalistic double-check and professionalism, but out of a sentiment of intimidation. Finally, to show that it was a form of intersubjective self-censorship, it should be shown that it was not the result of a conscious choice but that it went “without thinking”; or, in other words, that the action was in no need of justification.

Generally speaking, it can be said that there were both instances of information-repression and very one-sided diffusion of information. The best documented discrimination has been published by the media watchdog FAIR. It reports that of 878 sources used by the network broadcasts to describe the conflict, only one was a representative of a national peace organisation. Likewise, of the 2.855 minutes of network coverage of the crisis from 8 August 1990 until 3 January 1991, a mere twenty-nine minutes (or 1 percent of airtime) dealt with grassroots dissent, even though opinion polls showed that half the country opposed going to war. Organisations opposing the war, such as the Military Families Support Network and Physicians for Social Responsibility, were unable to purchase commercial time. “Refusing airtime to these groups, CNN and network stations in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington claimed the advertisement were ‘deemed to be unbalanced’ and ‘against policy’. At the same time pro-war groups such as Citizens for Free Kuwait — a lobby organized and managed by the public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, that was retained by the Kuwaiti government-in-exile — successfully produced and placed advertisements without hindrance, had access to Congress and even made presentations to the United Nations Security Council.”<sup>59</sup>

Maybe the most significant omission were Soviet satellite photographs taken on 11 September and 13 September 1990 which disclosed no evidence of a massive Iraqi build-up in Kuwait, while the Bush administration claimed there were 360.000 Iraqi troops and 2.800 Iraqi tanks in the area at that time. This information just restates previous assessments, as for instance, by the Israeli secret service.<sup>60</sup> It would have been very important in stopping the escalation because it would have relativised the anti-Saudi threat.

<sup>59</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 15. Referring to the FAIR report, Andre Gunder Frank writes: “Poor Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s minister who made the management of racist and totalitarian war propaganda synonymous with his name, would have to start in the kindergarten to learn today’s high-tech news management of Orwellian newspeak to brainwash a global population via instant satellite television. If democracy relies on informed people, all semblance of democratic procedures were thrown to the wolves” (“Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...”, pp. 276-77).

<sup>60</sup> Chapour Haghihat quotes *The Independent* from 7 August 1990 for this information. See “Les dessous de la guerre du Golfe”, pp. 14-15.

Two US analysts with experience in photographic interpretation found no evidence for the presence of an Iraqi force even 20 percent as large as the one the administration claimed was in place. They observed no Iraqi tent cities for troops, no tank congregations and no Iraqi planes at a deserted Kuwaiti air force base—all this five weeks after the invasion. There was no infrastructure such as the water supplies required to service troops, nor any evidence of movement. Yet, US media attributed little importance to the Soviet photographs. ABC purchased the satellite photos for \$US 1.560 in November 1990, but it declined to run a story based upon them because it did not have an image that covered southern Kuwait.

This was a strange argument. These other photos existed, but no network purchased them. At times, the argument was made that the whole thing was made up by this (private) Soviet agency. But it can be argued that the agency, being new on the market, would destroy its commercial future if it made a mistake. Finally, a Florida newspaper, the *St. Petersburg Times*, purchased the additional photographs, including one of Saudi Arabia. The story was finally published on 6 January 1991. The Pentagon declined to explain the discrepancy between the photographs and its own version of events. “After publication, the national wire services declined to transmit the story, and no other major newspaper followed upon it.”<sup>61</sup>

These examples seem to indicate a general mood to stay within the frame of acceptable or legitimate news-reporting already mentioned in the previous section. Having become the co-producer of the “logistic” reality meant, in turn, that the military and the journalists’ view became at points nearly symbiotic. This was certainly encouraged by the military, as for instance when the *Inmarsat* satellite telephones appeared in the pools of journalists. The military warned that their use could be giving signals to the Iraqis which would make them recognisable. Journalists much limited their use.<sup>62</sup> But the question to what extent this increasing mutual identification affected behaviour and coverage is not limited to conscious attempts by the military to forge an environment most suitable to the development of such a symbiosis. It is not only an issue of indirect institutional power.

The issue of identification has to be conceptualised by the acceptance of a system of meaning, by the journalists’ attempt to “fit in”. “[T]he remarkable facet of this system was not the number of pool pieces which were censored but the number which were not.”<sup>63</sup> The result was a coverage where military and journalists’ understanding of their reality fused. Symbols, interpretations became increasingly interchangeable and mutually feeding. As with the TV journalists in the US, the news reporter on the spot became trapped. Not only conscious adaptation but a piece-meal internalisation occurred. The empirically revealing point is that when the end of the conflict introduced a temporal distance, journalists realized this pressure and their “self-evident” reporting.

<sup>61</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 61.

<sup>62</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 58.

<sup>63</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 55.

For journalists to resist this pressure meant not only courage but also the capacity to distance themselves from the “normal” view. More independent stances which questioned the weapons-eye view of the conflict were not only propagandistically attacked, but honestly disbelieved, as witnessed by Peter Arnett whose report on the bombing of the milk-powder factory earned him nearly McCarthyist reactions.

Robert Fisk has been one of the few to realise relatively early both the extent of the identification and the effect on the production of news.

The unquestioned nature of our coverage of this war is one of its most dangerous facets. Many of the American pool dispatches sound as if they have been produced by the military, which, in a way, they have. For the relationship between reporter and soldier here is becoming almost fatally blurred.<sup>64</sup>

### 3. Conclusion: Social contracts, whether stabilised abroad or not

This chapter analysed the interrelation between practices. Here, power phenomena can be understood as systematic effects of this interrelation, seen either from the receiving practices’ side in the systematic disturbance of legitimation practices; or seen from the sending side as the (inertial) spill-over effects of the inner processes of one practice.

It attempted to analyse Iraq’s *fuite en avant*, its precipitation into the Gulf Conflict, as the last instance of an endemic political legitimacy crisis in Arab societies. The interaction of the state-building pressures of international society with particular state-society processes in Arab societies have produced a political culture which is always articulated with reference to the “West” and has not been able to find an equilibrium. On the “receiving” side, legitimation is systematically questioned, the underlying practices weakened. By analysing which dispositions these legitimatory practices have created the analysis of governance shows the social construction of Iraqi options.

The study of the spill-over effects of US practices, the tacit power of the US, focused on the reproduction of a US identity practice in need of adaptation with the demise of the traditional danger/enemy. Indeed, the Second Gulf War can be seen as a moment in the practices’ attempt to construct a substitute to the Cold War threat. This inertia of US foreign policy practice after the end of the Cold War has been analysed by Realists as well, when the Bush administration evoked “fears of a return to the old world as the justification for maintaining a role that had been forged in response to the necessities arising from the cold war.”<sup>65</sup> This paradox appears less as such, if one conceives it as the representation of a “new world order” which is meant to reproduce US identity and established practices. It is very revealing when they write that

nor was it clear that the Bush administration would itself be content with a foreign policy whose principal function was that of providing the reassurance expected of a

<sup>64</sup> Robert Fisk, *The Independent*, 6 February 1991.

<sup>65</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 26.

custodial role. In the months preceding the gulf crisis the administration often seemed less persuaded by its own arguments on the need for maintaining continuity of role and policy. What *it seemed sure of was the need, rather than the reasons for the need.*<sup>66</sup>

But Realism's individualist approach conceives it as a paradoxical or wrong choice, at best as a unreflected habit that is irrationally kept in times where the environment has changed (as all the generals that fight the last war); an instance of North's *path dependence*. It does not conceive it as the inertial effect of the reproduction of a field whose legitimacy is linked up with a specific construction of reality. Whereas it is not part of a Realist power analysis, it is part of an analysis of governance for the practice's capacity to impose the principles of the construction of reality and thereby attributes legitimacy for those actions done in concordance with the practices.

The final illustration of the construction of reality, spill-over effects and legitimation processes concerned the field of the production of information. The "constraints" of commercial news production and the internalised discipline of self-censorship contributed to the perception of the war where the eyes of the soldier and the journalist often became interchangeable. Non-critical dispositions were empowered to such an extent that journalists afterwards questioned how it could have happened. Warfare appeared as a rational reaction to a perceived threat and thus to legitimate US (and allies) policies. Independently of the fact if it were so, this legitimation process is an important moment of the analysis of governance.

It was taken up in this section which looks at border-transgressing effects of practices, because the particular international organisation of the field of information privileges the US view. Practices of self-censorship might be inscribed into a particular field but the truth they construct commands a wider audience.

<sup>66</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 26.

# 13

## Governance through collective memory: just war tales and the World War II script



This chapter handles the third facet of governance which is concerned with practices' capacity to mobilise and reproduce dispositions *within* a given field. It will touch the way collective memory mobilises existing dispositions, be they actions or perceptions, and how those dispositions will be reproduced. First, a section will clarify the concepts of collective memory and symbolic power, and their place in the study of governance. Then, a short introduction to metaphorical forms of legitimation will be followed by the way in which the World War II script biased the understanding and action during the Second Gulf War.

As in the previous chapter, an intersubjective analysis of governance does not only ask what concepts of power can tell us about the Second Gulf War, but what the (real-world) problematisation of the Second Gulf War tells us about tacit and open legitimacy struggles within established practices, exemplified by US foreign policy/identity, and IR/IPE analysis. The illustration will be limited to the Western side.<sup>1</sup> It will show how *symbols evoked particular dispositions for the understanding of the Second Gulf War as an anti-appeasement crusade, and for US intransigent action during the conflict.*

### 1. Symbolic Power or the ritualised mobilisation of collective memory

How can symbols have power? True, we speak of “powerful symbols” in everyday language. Yet, it is a very elliptic expression.

<sup>1</sup> Saddam Hussein was, of course, also guided by collective memory. The allied presence in Saudi Arabia, which has the major sacred places of Islam, evoked the Crusades. The attempt to control primary resources echoed colonialism. It certainly echoed various prior humiliations that the Western world was perceived to have inflicted to the Arab-Islamic world. See Claudia Schmid, *Lokale, regionale und internationale Dimensionen des Golfkonfliktes*, pp. 44-47; Jean Leca, “Aux origines de la crise: le discours des acteurs”, pp. 45-48.

The individualist relational approach would conceive the power of symbols as a shorthand for linguistic or cultural tools on which an agent can draw as a power resource. Taking into account the value system of the contenders in a power contest, symbols would evoke particular understandings and reactions that, in turn, would change the behaviour in the direction preferred by the symbol-user. When peace-movements evoked the danger of Vietnam, they tried to influence the Bush administration in favour of a non-military response. The other way round, repeatedly calling Bush a “wimp”, was a powerful device for those who wanted him to stay firm against aggression.

And, as usual, these attempts are not necessarily successful. Bush was called a “wimp” by those who wanted to denigrate him - but who often were also exactly those who aspired to avoid war. There are at least three ways to explain this apparently irrational behaviour. First, they did not know that it could foster a more pro-war posture. Second, they did it in the context of another front, namely domestic politics (and the mid-term elections), where the delegitimation of Bush was achieved by this claim, even if linkage with foreign policy, the Second Gulf War, was activating a behaviour less in concordance with their preferences. In other words, it would be a multiple game on different “tables” with different stakes. Finally, they were lying about one of their aims. They really acquiesced in the war although for electoral reasons they ran on a more peaceful ticket. These are the three typical ways to resolve the power puzzle: unawareness of linked, but clashing means-ends relations in different domains; multiple preferences; and coherent rationality given by looking at “real” preferences.

In this relational approach, “power” derives from the capacity to get one’s will done. Not the symbols, but the agents using them, have power. The elliptic sentence of “powerful symbols” means that particular resources (are known to usually) resound in the value-system of the recipient. “Powerful symbols” is used similarly to “powerful weapons”. The following approach will take a Weberian *Verstehen* analysis a bit further, in particular in the conceptualisation of collective memory.

### 1.1. “Belief systems” and collective memory

International Relations has not been unaware of the issue of collective memory, or the way the interpretation of reality can be part of policy-making and analysis. Foreign policy analysis developed a subfield on the impact of belief systems, widely conceived, on decision-making. Applied to particular statesman, or to particular crises, or to both, their cognitive maps or operational codes are analysed as “filters” which select and process information and enframe decision-making. Spurred by unexpected behaviour of statesmen, belief systems provided a further explanatory variable. The rational choice approach provided the background for the definition of logical puzzles to which psychological models provided answers and policy recommendations.

From its psychological origins, the literature on belief systems has moved to include sociological approaches. Partly this stems from the problem of linking individual belief

systems with decision-making outcomes which are generally group-processed.<sup>2</sup> One way would be to follow the research programme outlined by Graham Allison, who points to the possible extension of his three models by a cognitive fourth model.<sup>3</sup> Cognitive approaches could also be supplemented by a neo-institutionalist solution where socialized sets of values might turn decision-makers into role-players.<sup>4</sup> The other solution is to leave the individualist account altogether and to refer to sociological/anthropological studies, where a “belief system is a set of ideas that transcends the individuals who are committed to it.”<sup>5</sup> Positing a belief system which “can be said to have a life of its own... does not deny the existence of private belief systems which are influenced by psychological rather than social processes”<sup>6</sup> implies a shift of the analysis toward the maintenance and evolution of belief systems, rather than on their punctual impact on individual cognitive processes in times of crises. Hence, the analysis of belief systems can show them as legitimacy devices and thus as part of a power analysis.<sup>7</sup> An analysis of governance treats the “lessons of the past” as constructivist and legitimacy devices which appear to the decision maker as “an implicit view of where history is ‘naturally’ or ‘automatically’ leading.”<sup>8</sup> A constructivist approach does not show “how a belief system can filter ‘reality’ in limited ways, but ... the extent to which ‘reality’ itself is symbolically constructed by beliefs.”<sup>9</sup>

If belief systems are operationalised this way, they are perfectly compatible with an analysis of governance through collective memory.<sup>10</sup> Analysing the Falkland/Malvinas War, Michael Dillon operationalises belief systems as the language and beliefs of the British defence culture. In times of a crisis, agents challenged to interpret and to act to unexpected events, appropriate the symbolic inheritance of a belief system to make sense of the world. Not only the Margaret Thatcher, but also Parliament and the media

<sup>2</sup> Steve Smith, “Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations”, in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds) *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Graham T. Allison, *The Essence of Decision*, p. , refers to John Steinbrunner’s work, later published as *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> Steve Smith, “Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations”, p. 32 envisages such a solution.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Little, “Belief Systems in the Social Sciences”, in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds) *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Little, “Belief Systems in the Social Sciences”, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> John MacLean, “Belief Systems and Ideology in International Relations: a Critical Approach”, in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds) *Belief Systems and International Relations*, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> See the lessons of the past school as presented by Steve Smith, “Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations”, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Dillon, “Thatcher and the Falklands”, in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds) *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> For a similar conceptualisation of “everyday taken-for-granted ‘stock of knowledge’ of a society”, see James A. Aho, “Heroism, the Construction of Evil, and Violence”, in V. Harle (ed) *European Values in International Relations* (London: Pinter Publications, 1990), pp. 15-28. For its discussion with reference to the Second Gulf War, see Heikki Patomäki, “Poetry, Just Law and Oil in the Gulf Crisis. A study of the Role of Metaphors and Moral Narratives in World Politics” (paper presented at the Inaugural Conference of the Pan European Association of International Relations, Heidelberg, 16-20 September 1992), pp. 47-48, 51.



mobilised their common property of symbols, in particular the Churchillian rhetoric of World War II. “Sharing a common language and resorting to it independently in the first instance, they soon found themselves investing the crisis with the same sentiments and saying the same things about it. Mrs Thatcher’s response was thus reflected in that of other opinion leaders and found widespread support in opinion polls. Her message was amplified in the process.”<sup>11</sup>

This does not mean that a more sociological approach *excludes* cognitive approaches, but that they approach them with different meta-theoretical assumptions. Therefore, an intersubjective and constructivist approach could refer to the agent level only after the analysis of the respective practices in the form of the enactment of particular dispositions, starting already from the general interpretation of events. The psychological factor would be a supplementary feature that cannot be studied apart from the cultural context; the focus would be on the reproduction of collective memory and not on individual decision-making. To avoid misunderstandings between these different theoretical and empirical research programmes, in the following the expression “belief systems” refers to a cognitive-behavioural approach and “collective memory” to an intersubjective-constructivist one.<sup>12</sup>

The two approaches differ with regard to an analysis of power. In the cognitive-behavioural approach, belief systems are conceived as independent causes for the explanation of decisions. They supplement power or its distribution as causal factors within the context of decisions. Belief systems might have “powerful” effects, but they are not part of a power analysis, except indirectly if they are targeted by propaganda. In an intersubjective approach, the way collective memory is created, mobilised and reproduced is always part of an analysis of governance. Whereas an individualist approach sees these factors as puzzles to be randomly assessed, the intersubjective approach conceives them as systematically effecting, and hence to be necessarily included in a dyadic power analysis. Indeed, taking power seriously, at least since Steven Lukes’ third dimension, implies a shift away from decision-making studies, whether supplemented by cognitive approaches or not.

## 1.2. Governance through collective memory

The conceptualization of “symbolic power” will therefore not rest upon the established approaches of belief systems. Symbols can, then, be seen as part of the collective memory of the practice. They acquire their “power” by their effect on the legitimation of the very practices they respond to, whether challenging or not. Consequently, the approach takes up the question why particular symbols are believed to be powerful, and others not, and

<sup>11</sup> Michael Dillon, “Thatcher and the Falklands”, pp. 178-79.

<sup>12</sup> Verbeek claims that sociological approaches only with difficulty arrive at “insightful empirical analysis”. Yet, this assumes empirical questions derived from an individualist decision-making research programme. For his plea to restrict “belief systems” to individual attributes, see Bertjan Verbeek, *Anglo-American Relations 1945-1956. A comparison of neorealist and cognitive psychological approaches to the study of international relations* (Florence: European University Institute, unpubl. PhD, 1992), pp. 82-84.

does not leave it to behaviourally “revealed” effects. The choosers are not the focus of analysis (which does not preclude their ontological status), but the way choice is thought, identified and conducted within practices.

This does not mean that there is a oppressive “structure” which leaves no choice to the individual. This would be an objectivist structural approach. On the contrary, there are always an infinitude of different linguistically produced symbols.<sup>13</sup> But not all of them have the same legitimacy effect. To approach it requires first an analysis of the practices in which the agent is part and then the way they are linked up. By looking at practices and their shared system of meaning, one can at least partly understand how preferences and interests are formed and how action in accordance with these expectations are tacitly honoured attributing ritually legitimacy to the agent, and thus indirectly to the entire practice. To refer to Britain’s glorious past not only interprets particular events, it also reproduces British defence culture and legitimates Thatcher’s action, willingly or not.

Another difference from a rational choice approach lies in the identification of collective memory. The rational choice approach assumes that there is a possible identification between the observer and the agent. A constructivist approach assumes the two to be responding to different practices, and thus not to be subsumable to each other. Therefore, the interpretation of the value-systems must include a self-reflective analysis of the observers’ audience within their academic (or public, or political) community. This distinguishes the observer from the participant agent. Whereas the participants in the practice of the international society of statesmen refer implicitly and through their actions to the practice of which they are part, IR observers must construct within their own respective practice *both* levels, action and knowledge. Therefore, the analysis will always refer to *two* kinds of collective memories, the one on the level of action, the other on the level of observation.

### 1.3. Assessing collective memory: myth, script, symbol, and metaphor

It is through their power to merge diverse perceptions and beliefs into a new and unified perspective that symbols affect what men want, what they do, and the identity they create for themselves.

Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*, p. 6.

A more precise introduction into the concepts of symbol, metaphor, and ritual might help to clarify how collective memories are understood and studied in the following.

Let me start with one word which I will try to use only very seldomly, namely “myth”. The first reason is that it has strong connotations of something which is known to be wrong, a kind of psychological disturbance that hinders the agent from acting rationally. This concept is least useful for a study of governance because it takes for granted exactly what should be studied: the production of (legitimate) truth and rationality.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 20.

Admittedly, there are usages more cogent to a power analysis. Thus, Mircea Eliade conceives myths as telling about an original (and originating) situation, where the time reference is deleted. This return to a “sacred” time constitutes a break with normal temporality. Telling a myth is the reactualisation of this atemporal moment during which the told events have taken place. The myth is a passage point to this atemporal time, it symbolically abolishes the present time frame. In traditional societies, for Eliade, established rituals reactivate myths and thereby regularly introduce both this aspiration for the eternal and, at the same time, the distance towards the limits of daily life.<sup>14</sup> Interesting here is the mobilisation of myths in collective memory and their “powerful” effects. Similarly, Raoul Girardet’s study on political myths also stresses Georges Sorel’s approach which is concerned with the organizational effects of myths understood as an “ensemble lié d’images motrices” stimulating human energies.<sup>15</sup>

But, and this is the second reason why the concept of myth will be sparingly used, myths refer to very old narratives stemming from a supposedly common archaic or at least “original” experiences. I do not deny the interest of similar approaches,<sup>16</sup> but will only touch it with reference to the US myth of the frontier. Otherwise, my concern has been with historically much closer memories, as they were visible in the Gulf War, namely the World War II memory in the US and the Vietnam syndrome. Although these memories are certainly using particular images which are of longer date, as the myths of conspiracy (fascism, fundamentalism), the Saviour (US) and the golden age (new world order), I will concentrate less on the structural similarities with older myths. Rather, focusing on practices of legitimation, the analysis touches particularly the political dispositions (interpretations and actions) that are mobilized through them. In accordance with usual terminology, I will refer to the layers of collective memory, which are linked to particular events, such as World War II, Vietnam and others, as “scripts”.<sup>17</sup>

What indicates the existence of such scripts? How can scripts link up past with present events? This touches two other concepts, namely symbols and metaphors. Symbols, as used here, will be understood as a patterning perception and interpretation, and, analytically speaking, both as an indicator and a trigger of a specific mobilized script. They stand for something more, they epitomise it. Metaphors, on the other hand, will be used as those symbols that allow the passage from one script to the other.<sup>18</sup> To compare

<sup>14</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Images et symboles. Essais sur le symbolisme magico-réligieux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), pp. 73-77.

<sup>15</sup> Raoul Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1986), pp. 13-14, 179.

<sup>16</sup> For a very stimulating way of using such a structuralist account in IR, see Isabelle Grunberg, “Exploring the ‘myth’ of hegemonic stability”, *International Organization*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1990), p. 451 (for the methodology) and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> The concept “script” has the disadvantage of evoking something which is physically written down, whereas it should stand for a particular way of telling a story which is consistently reinscribed into collective memory, if not forgotten. As a general rule, I use already coined terms and hesitate to add my own terminology to the already exploding conceptual dictionary.

<sup>18</sup> Strictly speaking, metaphors are all those verbal images that allow the passage from one semantic *field*

Saddam Hussein with Hitler is an analogy. To use this analogy evokes the glorious World War II script as a tool for understanding of the new event, the invasion of Kuwait. As such, “Hitler” functions as a symbol for this script. By recalling the punitive and preventive “necessities” inscribed into the World War II script, Saddam Hussein is constructed as a criminal. The passage from (domestic) legal to the (international) political field is metaphorical and mobilizes the penal logic for dealing with Saddam Hussein.

Such an analysis is not at all new in IR. “Security” has been successfully analysed in a way similar to the one proposed here, although it was not called a metaphor. Close to the use of the word symbol here, Ole Wæver starts from calling the label “security” an “indicator of a specific *problematique*, a specific field of practice: it is historically the field where states threaten each other, challenge sovereignties, try to impose their will on others, defend their interdependencies, etc.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, naming something a “security” problem, i.e. the “securitisation” of an issue, mobilizes perceptions and legitimates actions of the security field to which the issue has been moved: “By saying ‘security’ a state-representative moves the particular case into a specific area; claiming a special right to use the means necessary to block this development.”<sup>20</sup> In this sense, whenever the symbol “security”, standing for a whole field, is invoked, it refers to and prepares the passage to the internal logic of that field, as a metaphor in the above terminology. Due to the fact that the security field legitimates state action, Wæver sees “securitisation” as a self-justifying act of political elites. Yet, he also notes that the security field is often mobilized unconsciously even by those that want to oppose these very elites. “... one often gets the impression of the object playing around with the subjects — the field with the researchers. The *problematique* locks people into talking in terms of ‘security’ and thereby (especially when they try to work ‘critically’) reinforcing the hold of ‘security’ on our thinking.”<sup>21</sup> The security field as a practice creates, mobilizes and reproduces, also impersonally, thinking and acting dispositions in the field, whose legitimacy is thus tacitly reconducted. The more the field has a self-confined logic, i.e. the more “autistic” it is, the more its mobilisation governs action.

This also shows that, empirically, symbols and metaphors are not always easy to disentangle. Nearly every symbol can become metaphorical in the sense just described. Yet, there is a difference in focus. Whereas symbols focus on one script, and thus lead analysis to spell it out in detail, metaphors concentrate on linkages. Hitler has become the lynchpin for reactivating the World War II script during the Second Gulf War. In the future, Saddam Hussein will symbolize something else, although he will be symbolically linked to Hitler and the World War II script which, in its turn, will be changed.

to another. See Francesca Rigotti, *Il potere e le sue metafore* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1992), p. 13. Since different scripts can actually share a common field, my usage is slightly different. My focus is not on the different semantic backgrounds, but on the different set of dispositions that can be evoked also within one field.

<sup>19</sup> Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, p. 9.

Thus, the basic starting point of an analysis of symbols and metaphors is the hermeneutical-constructivist assumption that they influence interpretation and thinking, indeed that they become inextricably linked with political events and theses. They are part of the categorisation through which the empirical world is seen. “The name “table” calls attention to a flat, raised surface suitable for eating and writing but ignores other properties of the wood and space comprising a table.”<sup>22</sup> Symbols simplify the perception of events and this cognitive economy thereby permits their understanding. “Thought is metaphorical and metaphor pervades language, for the unknown, the new, the unclear, the remote are apprehended by one’s perceptions of identities with the familiar. Metaphors, therefore, define the pattern of perception to which people respond.”<sup>23</sup> “Yet this impressive process of symbolic creation is not self-conscious. Our naive view holds that linguistic terms stand for particular objects or behavior, and so we do not ordinarily recognize that elaborate cognitive structures are built upon them.”<sup>24</sup> Being tied to the implicit legitimation of political ideas, either by recalling a shared scheme of interpreting the world or by evoking a sense of connivance in the public, it is just not possible to “leave the metaphor” without endangering the legitimacy of these very ideas.<sup>25</sup>

#### 1.4. Ritual legitimation

la forme par où les productions symboliques participent le plus directement des conditions sociales de leur production est aussi ce par quoi s’exerce leur effet social le plus spécifique, la violence proprement symbolique, qui ne peut être exercée par celui qui l’exerce et subie par celui qui la subit que sous une forme telle qu’elle soit méconnue en tant que telle, c’est-à-dire reconnue comme légitime.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 171.

Identity and preference formation are affected by symbols and metaphors of the practices’ shared system of meaning. These are not necessarily conscious, indeed they work best if they are not. They become part of an analysis of governance because they contribute to the legitimation of existing practices. Edelman goes as far as to say that “conventional observation and conventional research methods (notably opinion and attitude research) chiefly tell us which symbols are currently powerful, not what ‘reality’ is. To define the

<sup>22</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 158.

<sup>23</sup> Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action. Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (New York: Academic Press, 1971), p. 67. In my terminology, “metaphors” in this quote refer more generically to “symbols”.

<sup>24</sup> Murray Edelman, *Political Language. Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> For this argument, see Francesca Rigotti, *Il potere e le sue metafore*, pp. 17, 188. She calls this mutual feedback between metaphors and political ideas or interpretations, the “constitutive function of metaphors”.

cognitive effects of symbols as people's 'wants' is to justify institutions and policies, not to explain their genesis or dynamics."<sup>26</sup>

Legitimacy is enacted via "rituals". This, for the context of IR rather strange concept needs some explanation. Legitimacy is the basis of authority. It works through the consent of the participants. This consent is not necessarily consciously given. Authority is tacitly attributed to those conforming most perfectly to the expectations constructed by the practice itself. This non-recognition of a tacit consent is the basis of legitimacy.<sup>27</sup> This consent is given prior to those situations where it is mobilised.

La croyance de tous, qui préexiste au rituel, est la condition de l'efficacité du rituel. On ne prêche que des convertis. Et le miracle de l'efficacité symbolique disparaît si l'on voit que la magie des mots ne fait que déclencher des ressorts — les dispositions — préalablement montés.<sup>28</sup>

The expression "ritual" is used for the following reason. Those participating in a ritual imitate a pre-given set of actions and thoughts. Their repetition and endorsement of "common sense" is the presupposition of authority and is only later enacted. Their consent is symbolically enacted, so to speak. Common practices, such as rituals, which systematically mobilise symbols, are a valuable tool in the social construction of political reality.

Moreover, the word "ritual" is used as an analogy to a traditional ritual which worked as long as its role remained unseen. Becoming aware of legitimacy mechanisms means that one becomes aware of a ritualised act. It is like in the tale, where one sees suddenly the king to be naked. Here it also becomes empirically accessible. No reproduction of a practice is stable. As already alluded to above, it depends on the similarity between the situations in which the collective memory and its dispositions were formed and the ones in which they are actually enacted. Dispositions will tend to ease possible contradictions, as cognitive dissonances on the psychological level or on the intersubjective level. But "inertial" perception can become visible and appear, to those outside the "common sense" of the practice, as unreflected rituals which are blindly reapplied. Thus, the symbols and metaphors attribute power to those handling them, to the extent the social context is not perceived to contradict its assumptions<sup>29</sup>: only then they are "authoritative".

Political rituals, as well as ritualised analyses of world events, link up a particular way to see international affairs with emotional attachments. Discourses, theories and actions are built out of symbols that embody certain views of how the world is constructed. Rituals charge them emotionally and make them salient. Since they affect the processes of legitimation, positively or not, they are central to an analysis of governance.

<sup>26</sup> Murray Edelman, *Political Language. Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 133.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 68.

It is for this centrality that IR-poststructuralist literature is filled with the reference to Realist rituals: it is their contention that Realism is less a verified theory and more a nearly mechanically enacted disposition to see the world — even if the events to which it is applied do not necessarily confirm it. Often attacked on grounds which make only sense within the Realist framework of analysis, Realists' arguments appear tautologically to the outsider. Yet, whereas these rituals govern Realist discourse, the contenders are applying outright power: trying to render conscious the ritual is to undermine its legitimacy, to impede its functioning. If rituals discipline thought, their critiques undermine it by making the disciplinary devices conscious.

The political debate and decisions during the Second Gulf War took place in this context. Several scripts were applied to make sense of the new context after the end of the Cold War. Not only the identity of the major actors but also their ways of interpreting their history was open to challenge. One way to coopt challenge is to mobilise the dichotomies and opposing positions of the scripts where the legitimate and the non-legitimate positions were already fixed. Becoming an isolationist, an idealist, an appeasement politician and so forth, are pre-established negative roles in which political arguments have to be shaped in order to be effective, i.e. de-legitimizing the other.

### 1.5. Rituals of power, or the struggle for truth

Political debate is staged before the actors enter the scene. How “effective” this reinscription of collective memory will be, i.e. how much legitimacy it conveys to actors, depends *not only* upon their resource endowment and their skilful use of propaganda, but also on the capacity of the practice to harmoniously transform past scripts into present events. Yet agents can influence the choice of scripts and the invention of new symbols.

But why are some rituals enacted, mixing which mobilised scripts and not others? Political rituals erase as much history from our memories as they inscribe on them.<sup>30</sup> The layers of collective memory are the necessary source of legitimating (and often contradictory) symbols which, in turn, pattern perception and interpretation. But their multiplicity does not determine any particular choice of symbols. One could expect those symbols to be used again that are considered most stable in mobilising support (for or against the power holders), but they can be mixed and also (not necessarily consciously) invented. It is certain, for instance, that the faked picture of the lonely oil-polluted cormorant mobilised images against Iraq, generally of the kind of the ruthless dictator who has no consideration for any form of life, killing innocent beings — Hitler. This echoed the Iraqi's gas bombing of the Kurds. Again Hitler. It could, however, become a symbol also of an environmental script.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> For historical “ecological crimes”, such as the destruction of forests and land in World War I and the use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, not to speak of nuclear bombs and tests, see the timely reminder by Fred Halliday, “The Gulf War 1990-1991 and the study of international relations”, *Review of International*

Through rituals' effect on constructing options and mobilising bias, their "governance", they become part of a political struggle themselves. Political debate is largely structured to win acceptance of a particular categorisation as appropriate for interpreting events. Legitimation derives from the simplified perception and the emotional attachment to the symbols and rituals used to win the support: the more legitimate, the more the debate is perceived in forms of personal values and empirical facts and normalises the social construction of perception.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, but quite expectedly, there exist no general rules which script will be most successful, nor what changes happen to the scripts and symbols they embody. As a cultural anthropologist concludes, "the processes by which such changes occur are as yet little understood."<sup>33</sup>

## 2. The metaphorical construction of legitimate action

While the world waited, Saddam Hussein systematically raped, pillaged, and plundered a tiny nation, no threat to his own. He subjected the people of Kuwait to unspeakable atrocities—and among those maimed and murdered, innocent children.

George Bush, "State to the Union", 29 January 1991

Critics for the left and the right alike were attacking the justifications given by the US administration for its swift, massive and finally violent reaction. Although their reasons might be different, they both pointed to the metaphorical derivation of the war justification from the domestic penal-legal script. The justification of war, and for finding allies, prominently resorted to UNSC resolutions. But their interpretation was overlaid by the transfer of a discourse that serves the domestic legal-penal system in a liberal democratic state. This script mobilised symbols which referred not to war, but to a "depoliticised process of crime and judicial punishment."

This single displacement transformed not only the way people judged the political background to the Gulf war, but above all *how* they perceived it: namely as a criminal act with juridical consequences. Thus the complex fields of force that constitute global politics were magically transformed into the image of a world enclosed within a constitutional state order, run according to the liberal theory of law. *The metaphor passed itself off not as a moral truth but as the explanation of actual events.*<sup>34</sup>

There have been attempts to read this metaphorical structuring and legitimation of US intervention as a purposeful and planned behaviour from the US.<sup>35</sup> This is not necessarily the case. Indeed, the following analysis of this metaphorical justification neither pre-

*Politics*, vol. 20, no. 2 (April 1994), p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Murray Edelman, *Political Language. Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Gowan, "The Gulf War, Iraq and Western Liberalism", *New Left Review*, no. 187 (May-June 1991), p. 30, last italics added.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Gowan, "The Gulf War, Iraq and Western Liberalism", p. 31.



supposes nor necessarily shows US intentionality. This does not mean that the US government was not a competent manipulator the metaphorical heritage of the Western world.

To recall, metaphors have been defined as those linguistic devices that link one script to another and symbolically help to enact particular meanings in one script to understand events in another context. It superposes different scripts for this understanding, or even shifts the interpretation of an event from one script to another. The choice of one or other metaphor mobilises a disposition of interpretation and action.

One particularly interesting study plays on the different metaphorical systems whose enactment helped to justify US intervention, a common one shared also by the politicians, and an expert one.<sup>36</sup> The common system is based on the anthropomorphising of the state and the “tale” of the just war, characterised by three actors: one villain, one hero, one victim. Bush used two versions of this tale. The first was mobilised when the US propaganda referred to the (US) way of life, oil and jobs that were to be secured in the Gulf. Lakoff calls it “Self-Defence Scenario”. Iraq is, of course, the villain, US the hero and the US and other industrialised nations are victims of the crime which consists in undermining international stability, both political and economic. Then, when this argument which traded oil for life did not really work, a second scenario of the just war tale became more prominent, “the Rescue Scenario”. Here, Iraq is the villain, Kuwait the victim, the US the hero, and the crime is kidnap and rape. The “rape” of Kuwait evoked the tale of the innocent virgin sacrificed to spare the village from the dragon/monster. Importantly, it mobilises an entire dramaturgy. There will be a hero to save the virgin at the last minute. The hero comes from afar, he kills the monster, saves the virgin, and gets a reward. The logic of the tale forbids the thought that the hero came to intrude in other’s affairs or that he came just to get the reward.<sup>37</sup>

The expert system is, for Lakoff, based on the “Clausewitz metaphor”, that is the shift from seeing war as violence to see it in a cost-benefit analysis. “The Clausewitz metaphor is the perfect expert metaphor, because it requires specialists of the political costs-benefit calculus. It positively sanctions the use of mathematics, of economics, of theories of probability, decision-making, and game-theory to render foreign policy rational and scientific.” It is metaphorical because it produces the following meaning transfers. First, it uses the state-as-person metaphor. Second, it transforms the qualitative effects on human beings into quantifiable costs and benefits, conceiving political as economic action. Third, it conceives rationality as source of profits. Finally it sees at war unidimensionally as a political expedient which, in turn is conceptualized as business.

<sup>36</sup> For the following, see George Lakoff, “Metafora e guerra. Il sistema metaforico usato per giustificare la guerra nel Golfo”, transl. by Alessandro Bugiolacchi (internet-distributed discussion paper, 31 December 1990).

<sup>37</sup> “Der Held rettet die Jungfrau. Die Sprache im Golfkrieg” (The hero saves the virgin. The language during the Gulf War), Interview mit der Wissenschaftlerin Elisabeth Leiss, geführt von Christian Thiel, *Freitag*, no. 37 (6-12 September 1991), p. 16.

Now, and here is in my view the interesting part of the analysis, whereas the common metaphorical system provides the background for an ethical justification, the second can only pragmatically justify war. Therefore, the two systems have to be superposed. The “sacrifices” of the hero in the just war tale must correspond to the “costs” in the Clausewitz metaphor and the victories of the just war to Clausewitzian benefits.

Yet this double reading is not very stable. There are at least two dissonances. The first is that in the Clausewitzian reading, Saddam Hussein is a rational calculator. Both for the World War II script and for the just war tale, however, he might be at best clever, but never rational in any comparable sense to the West. Otherwise the nuclear argument would have no impact. The second internal tension lies in the definition of victory. Again, as with the World War II script, the villain Hussein who has to be punished in the just war tale, should actually be spared in a cost-benefit analysis. There had to be a clear winner, the good, whereas the Realist Clausewitzian approach must not maximise victory but long-term gains, which might contradict (absolute) military victory. Therefore, Lakoff already thought before Desert Storm, that the least contradictory solution would consist in getting Iraq out of Kuwait, reinstalling the Emir, weakening Hussein’s regime enough to reduce his danger to his neighbours, but not too much to provoke those to profit from it. One way would be to get rid of Hussein to appease the just war tale but to leave his Ba’ath regime so as to be in accordance with the Clausewitz metaphor. It is indeed impressive to what extent this mirrors actual decisions reached well after this analysis.

The effect of this double reading is to mobilise biases for the understanding of the conflict. The war became not the unleashing of violent forces with unpredictable long-term political consequences but a technical enterprise to enforce an end, namely the rule of law.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the metaphorical reduction of the Iraqi state to Saddam Hussein had the effect to dehumanise the other Iraqi people. Reduced to accomplices of the villain, potential misdeeds against them were regrettably but unavoidably, “collateral”. Often metaphors of animals were used. Especially those referring to vermins or bugs have the effect of diminishing the restraint to kill. The metaphors evoke dispositions to action: vermins have to be eradicated, bacteria that attack one’s own body (one’s own nation) have to be killed. At a Riyadh briefing on 1 February 1991, “Lieutenant-Colonel Dick White described how the Iraqi move provided a perfect opportunity to hit targets from the air that had previously been dug in. ‘It’s almost like you flipped on the light in the kitchen at night and the cockroaches start scurrying there, and we’re killing them.’”<sup>39</sup> This use did not appear where there was no need for it. Thus, the German public was

<sup>38</sup> Peter Gowan, “The Gulf War, Iraq and Western Liberalism”, p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 140. Not that this was done only by the Western coalition. An Iraqi military communiqué during the Al-Khafji “incident” (Thursday, 29 January 1991) when Iraqi troops were able to take over a Saudi town at the border with relative ease, which was only taken back by Saudi and Qatari troops (with massive help by the US) 36 hours later, stated that the “heroic men” of the Iraqi air force had shot down three of the coalition’s “rats”. *Ibid.*

asked to take side, but not to take part in the war. The use of such metaphors, well enshrined in Nazi propaganda, would have rather repelled German public opinion.<sup>40</sup>

To recapitulate: what does interpretation of the the second Gulf War tell us about the reproduction of practices and their legitimation? Legitimacy is also metaphorical constructed. Metaphorically speaking, metaphors are powerful. They can, as we have just seen, even kill. They contribute to the mobilisation of particular dispositions to understand and act, and reproduce the context for assessment of legitimate action. The use of the just war “tale” not only justifies the intervention, but legitimated the fact that thinking about the intervention should be done in terms of the just war debate. The just war debate with its pre-established categories for judging the justification to go to war takes place in this context. It will be dealt with in the next chapter.

### 3. Who/what “kicked” the Vietnam syndrome?, or: the Second Gulf War script as Vietnam’s translation into World War II

When President Bush used the Hitler analogy, was it propaganda or was he behaving within the logic of the political field that established the successful rules to be followed to gain legitimacy for US intervention? Once the analogy seemed to work, was he and the public, including the observers, “governed” by the symbol, influenced to render consonant present with past (interpreted) events? In other words, was Bush preparing a spectacle to trap the imagination of the public, or were both trapped in the mobilised memories?

In Part IV, we have seen that the Bush administration, among others, did use extensively propaganda. Yet, this propaganda could only work, as argued in this chapter, with reference to the so-called “lessons of the past”, that is the dispositions provided by the collective memory of political practices, academic and practical. “Not all rituals that endow political arrangements with legitimacy are the product of conscious design... Although people do consciously manipulate rituals for political ends, they also sometimes invent, revise or revigorate ritual forms that have political effects without being conscious of what those effects will be.”<sup>41</sup>

This means that *besides* the direct propagandistic power attempts, the Second Gulf War recycled many long-established images that recalled the glorious moments to be emulated, such as World War II, and the negative ones to be exorcised, as the Vietnam War. It is impossible not only for the actors at the time, but also for their interpreters, to stay apart from the legitimacy devices inscribed therein. For instance, Vietnam “showed”, at least in the US conservative reading, the negative impact of the press on warfare. “Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome” meant also de-legitimizing any press critique, attributing domestic responsibility for American soldiers dying on the front. This needs not to be done intentionally. Collective memory itself, once mobilised constructs options and mobilises particular biases not reducible to the direct control of those who enact them.

<sup>40</sup> “Der Held rettet die Jungfrau. Die Sprache im Golfkrieg”, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, pp. 41-42.

The sheer repetition of the argument for other reasons, as for instance the reconfirmation of one's threatened identity patterns after the end of the Cold War, can have this effect, willingly or not. Prepared this way, the press will be not seen as the defender of public opinion (for which there exists, for example, the Watergate script), but as a potential stab in the back.

It was the degree to which virtually all information upon which opinions and perceptions, great and small, could be formed about the Gulf war was informed or influenced by media-managers operating on the Vietnam-inspired assumption that wars may be won on the battlefield, but they could also be lost on the domestic front. For critic John Pilger, the connivance of the media in the creation of this climate of consensus was the product of a contemptible culture "in which vast amounts of repetitive information are confined to a narrow spectrum of 'thinkable thought'." (Guardian, 7 January 1991)<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1. "Lessons" from Vietnam

This will not be another Vietnam. Never again will our armed forces be sent out to do a job with one hand tied behind their back. They will continue to have the support they need to get the job done...

George Bush,  
address to the Reserve Officers Association on 23 January 1991

The power analysis of the Second Gulf War has already shown how the avoidance of the Vietnam syndrome was the organising idea of US politics. The paradox that the most powerful country in the world, the US, lost the Vietnam war, was reinterpreted to mean that it would have been won on the field, if it had not been lost at home. The domestic front with liberals, the press, and so forth, was responsible for the "half-hearted" US power projection in Vietnam. In the face of more than 500.000 US soldiers in Vietnam, this seems rather self-deceptive. Yet this does not diminish its grip on collective memory: it is eagerly believed and avoids the questioning of national pride and identity. "If only we wanted...". Apparently half-hearted intervention was to be banned in general: if you go, go for good. This links the assessment of success with (more or less) complete victory. If there are no half-hearted interventions, limited ends become only acceptable if they can be circumscribed enough to allow within their range a full-hearted deployment of means. Politically speaking, this means that limited ends become a rather tricky political problem, as seen in the humanitarian interventions in Somalia.

Another lesson that seemed to derive from Vietnam and which was reinforced by the Carter administration's unlucky intervention in Iran, and Reagan's not much better intervention in Lebanon, was that Third World interventions tend either to become "quagmires", in which the initial effort get lost in the morass of local politics and strategics, or "escalators" where the initial limited intervention would ineluctably be drawn

<sup>42</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 24.

into a larger conflict.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, there were two conditions of war engagement derived from Vietnam: minimizing US casualties and avoiding protracted war.<sup>44</sup>

Experienced statesmen, i.e. those to whom such an authority is attributed, have to learn these lessons of the past. Yet, these scripts are never stable. The Vietnam war was in that respect always a contested script. The very reduction of the “problem” of Vietnam to too much timidity on the front of the US, and not to the blind and unreflected application of a Cold War logic, which confounded containment as a means with an end in itself, is an attempt to preempt such contested readings. The Vietnam “syndrome” is actually nothing more, but nothing less than the possibility that the entire legitimation of US policy after World War II, the self-sacrificing containment of world communism, is on shaky grounds. It is so crucial because it questions some fundamentals of US foreign policy self-representation. It is no mere struggle about “semantics”. The “right” rereading of Vietnam is crucial both to the continuous *ex-post* legitimation and to the reproduction of established policies. Legitimation is not a once-and-for-all acquired status even in historical events.

The official attempt of the Bush administration during the Second Gulf War to get rid of the Vietnam syndrome was only possible if the symbolic space of the Vietnam script could be filled with something else. The World War II script was increasingly used — to such an extent as to make one wonder if it did not, in turn, condition many of the choices the Bush administration made.

The following analysis of the Second Gulf War as a translating device to pass from Vietnam to World War II is based on the assumption, elaborated in the previous chapter, that the end of the Cold War has questioned the identity of US foreign policy, and thus, following Campbell, of the US itself. In times of such reproduction crises, where the context is perceived as contradicting the originating conditions of a practice, symbolic reassertion is extremely important. But the implosion of the Cold War was not of the sort to boost a spontaneous ritualisation through which battles and allegiances get newly understood and defined. Revolutions often produce the (new) conceptual means for their understanding: “The rites did not simply express previously existing popular perceptions of proper political relations and institutions; they also played a major role in creating these perceptions and ideals.”<sup>45</sup>

Nothing of this sort happened. The Second Gulf War eventually guided both politicians and observers back into known territories. To get rid of Vietnam and the special context of a war, with all its self-disciplining features (see previous chapter), appealed to many scripts. In the following, we take the US frontier myth and World War II which have been the most prominent for the actors involved in the conflict.

<sup>43</sup> For this analysis conducted in the context of the Second Gulf War, see Lawrence Freedman, “Escalators and quagmires: expectations and the use of force”, *International Affairs* (London), vol. 67, no. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 5-41.

<sup>44</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 160.

### 3.2. The mobilisation of the US “frontier”

For all the effort to draw a contrast between the two experiences of conflict, however, many of the features of the war in Vietnam resonated with the campaign against Iraq. In times of national crisis, even if self-amplified, there is a return to symbols that are fundamental for the identity of any practice. Most notable in this regard was the reproduction of the US myth of the frontier which generally refers to the always insecure and threatened borders of US’ own identity. These borders demarcate “civilisation” from “barbarism”, the (colonising) American from the (native) Indian, the home from the “foreign” both in land and people. The whole war was about “whether we live in a world governed by the rule of law or by the law of the jungle.”<sup>46</sup>

Already during the Vietnam war, enemy territory was referred to as “Indian territory”; and the same was said of Iraq. “And just as the United States had, under the guise of civilized behaviour, perpetrated unspeakable acts against Indians and Vietnamese—acts that included the mutilation of victims’ bodies as spoils of war—so too has it been alleged that U.S. servicemen in the Gulf collected the severed limbs of Iraqi soldier as trophies.”<sup>47</sup> This image of the Indian/barbarians and the frontier was also taken up with regard to the USSR when a news reporter for America’s NBC network commented on late February 1991 that the Soviets had ‘gone off their reservation’ with their efforts to broker a diplomatic solution to the First Gulf war.<sup>48</sup>

It would be fallacious to ascribe whatever deep-seated or hidden intention to these actions and linguistic slips which “come to one’s mind” both on the level of the acting agent and of the acting observer. Yet it shows that when agents justify and interpret their actions they often refer to symbols in collective memory that present a picture of the world which is emotionally so compelling as to be beyond debate.<sup>49</sup>

The Gulf discourse, the myth of the frontier, and the concomitant war can thus be seen as a ritual. As President Bush declared after the war, “America rediscovered itself during Desert Storm.” As Campbell notes, “this understanding of the conflict seems to satisfy a widely felt desire.”<sup>50</sup> But once they are mobilised they govern further attempts to make sense of the increasingly threatening events: “The mythology of the frontier achieves, in this sense, more than mere description. It provides also the prescription for action. It mandates that to ensure the survival of ‘civilisation’ the forces of ‘barbarism’ have to be constantly repelled if not overcome.”<sup>51</sup> The consequences of this need for a founding moment as a ritual for redefining identity and policy drives the entire US self-interpretation *and action* in the Second Gulf War.

<sup>46</sup> George Bush at a Republican fund-raising luncheon on 15 October, quoted in Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 193.

<sup>47</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 189, n. 42.

<sup>49</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 165.

### 3.3. The Hitler analogy in the World War II script

One of the most interesting phenomenon of this war was the repeated assessment that it was a “defining” moment. According to Brent Scowcroft, it is “the first test of our ability to maintain global or regional stability in the post Cold War era.”<sup>52</sup> Bush conceives it in these terms in his article in Newsweek from 26 November 1990. Besides the obvious impact on creating an atmosphere for extraordinary measures, such as warfare, it is impossible to exclude that actors, in fact, believed in a special historical tide in the “post-Wall” period. After all, Bush was deciding on a war where the US was expected to have heavy casualties. Only presupposing completely ruthless behaviour would invalidate the contention proposed here that the established practices of the Cold War were in a crisis. *A crisis happens exactly when the reproduction of established practices and their tacit legitimation become visible.* One might even suppose that the Bush administration was willing to accept a change of US foreign policy practice. But its routines were encouraging a perception of the world which disposed to construct substitutes for the USSR.

Therefore, an analysis of governance would privilege less the question of oil security for the understanding of US reaction as presented in chapter 7, than the Cold War dispositions, where the Second Gulf War eventually came to refer to the World War II script of Hitler, appeasement, and of vital interests. It became an opportunity to keep established procedures and institutions of the Cold War.<sup>53</sup> The established language of the Cold War mobilised through the Second Gulf War set off a self-legitimizing dynamic which conditioned the very conceiving of a change and the definition of options. The World War II script has furthermore the advantage of being a transnationally shared collective memory. Again, even if the Bush administration had used it for prompting domestic support, it certainly resounded “powerfully” with its European allies. Replace “US” for “Britain” in the next quote, and the Falkland War becomes legitimated as the Second Gulf War

Throughout the Western World and beyond there is a realisation that if this dictator succeeds in unprovoked aggression other dictators will succeed elsewhere. We are fighting a battle against that type of aggression, and once again it is Britain that is fighting it.<sup>54</sup>

The methodological problem is that it is difficult to disentangle the working of collective memory on the acting statesman and the observer. Often, secondary texts mix the two levels. Indeed Realism derives its strength from the “naturalness” from which statesmen and observer share a common view because they apparently share a common history. The remainder of this section will privilege the level of the statesman, leaving the reconstruction of the (academic) observer to the next chapter.

<sup>52</sup> quoted in Elizabeth Drew, “Letter from Washington”, *The New Yorker*, 24 September 1990, p. 106.

<sup>53</sup> For this interpretation, see also Mary Kaldor, “Nostalgie a ovest”, *Il Manifesto*, 13 January 1991.

<sup>54</sup> Margaret Thatcher before the House of Commons, 1982, quoted in Michael Dillon, “Thatcher and the Falklands”, p. 177.

*Hitler-Stalin-Hussein: the mobilisation of the ultimate enemy*

Yes, I felt and properly stated that Saddam was like Hitler.  
 President George Bush,  
 U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 174.

Munich and anti-appeasement became the symbolic background for waging the public opinion, but also the ritualised return to the heroic war and after-war period where totalitarianism was resisted. This parallel reading of the post-war-period and the post-Wall-period was indeed impressive, as if the US was afraid of lowering its guard against the timeless and ubiquitous threats to its security, widely and variously defined. This inertial effect of established policy practices returned to the origin: the anti-Hitler and implicitly the anti-Stalin war. The Hitler-Stalin link is most interesting because it upholds the Second World War posture into the Cold War, anti-totalitarianism being its glue. It is not unusual to see regular shifts between Hitler and Stalin, for instance, in the analysis of one observer who uses a “natural” analogy with Hitler, after a long description of Hussein’s “personality cult”, his way of dealing with domestic enemy’s, the little foreign experience and distorted view of the West, and his purging of the army (300 generals relieved and 15 shot by 1982), all duly compared to Stalin.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the political symbol of containment, as opposed to appeasement, can cover both the Second World War was a full-fledged war and the Cold War. This fusion is always open to critique and needs permanent reinscription.

From the very beginning, the lynchpin of the symbolic system became Adolf Hitler. There have been many conspiracy theories about a presumed US trap for Iraq (see chapter 14). Focusing on the mobilised World War II script diminishes the credibility of such explanations, which are often ex-post rationalisations. It might even be argued that the World War II script could explain partly the radical turn-around of US policies.

On 2 August (US time), i.e. just after the invasion, on his plane to Aspen, Colorado, where President Bush was going to meet the British Prime Minister Thatcher, he phoned both Egypt’s President Mubarak and Jordan’s King Hussein and agreed to leave them two days to find an Arab solution.<sup>56</sup> Yet, already the next day, the US had embarked on an intransigent position. On 4 August, the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* had front pages about an immediate attack of Saudi Arabia — all leaked by the administration.<sup>57</sup> What happened? At their meeting in Aspen, Thatcher used all her persuasiveness to convince Bush to resist forcefully, explicitly recalling Munich 1938.<sup>58</sup> She is claimed to have said the next day, “Remember, George, this is no time to go wobbly.” Since then, Bush did everything to make an “Arab giving in” impossible. On 4 August 1990, in

<sup>55</sup> Norman Friedman, *Desert Victory*, pp. 13-20.

<sup>56</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, pp. 64, 70.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>58</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 7.



Aspen Lodge, Camp David, Bush and his close crew of crisis managers decided to push Arab states intransigence.

What did the President think? According to several participants, Bush insists that he saw stark parallels between the crisis in the Gulf and the reaction of nations of Europe in the late 1930s to the threat and bluster of Nazi Germany. The Saudis and the other nations of the Gulf, Bush told his advisers toward the end of the Aspen Lodge meeting, had to be persuaded to reject the “appeasement option”.<sup>59</sup>

Reading in August Martin Gilbert’s *The Second World War* fortified his resolve with tales of atrocities committed by SS Death’s Head regiments marching into Poland.<sup>60</sup> On 23 October 1990, during a campaign swing through New Hampshire, the President declared that “I’m reading a book, and it’s a book of history, a great, big, thick History about World War II. And there is a parallel between what Hitler did to Poland and what Saddam Hussein has done in Kuwait.”<sup>61</sup>

With the anti-appeasement option of the Cold War garnished with the analogies of the Nazi regime, the entire perception of the Second Gulf War became a remake of the liberation of Europe. In his address from 8 August 1990, Bush equates it with the “struggle for freedom in Europe”. In this speech, where he declared, or rather confirmed, the sending of US troops to Saudi Arabia, he refers to “Iraq’s tanks [which] stormed in blitzkrieg fashion through Kuwait in a few short hours”, and could legitimate the sending of troops to Saudi Arabia not on the basis of evidence, but on the basis of an implicit analogy with Hitler’s invasion of Sudeten-Czechoslovakia as the prologue to Munich and the Second World War. “Given the Iraqi Government’s history of aggression against its own citizens as well as its neighbours, to assume Iraq will not attack again would be unwise and unrealistic.”<sup>62</sup> Against an inherently expansionist force, only counter-aggression works, “and so the reference to Hitler soon took on a significance of its own.”<sup>63</sup> Bush quotes the analogy officially on 15 August 1990: “A half century ago, our nation and the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should, and could, have been stopped. We are not going to make the same mistake again.”<sup>64</sup>

Although nobody would deny the ruthless nature of Saddam Hussein’s rule, as much as nobody denies the indifference with which this was usually met in the West, it is more his aggression against US interests that prompted the Hitler analogy than anything else.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 72.

<sup>60</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, pp. 2-3. For the reference to Martin Gilbert’s book, see also U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 174.

<sup>61</sup> The *New York Times*, 24 October 1990, quoted in Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 195.

<sup>62</sup> The quotes from the 9 August address are taken from “Excerpts From Bush’s Statement on U.S. Defense of Saudis”, *The New York Times*, 9 August 1990, p. A15.

<sup>63</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 131.

<sup>64</sup> Bush’s speech reported in *The New York Times*, 16 August 1990, quoted in Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 133.

There is more continuity than change in American objectives in the Middle East, and that is why, since the end of World War II, America has discovered more Hitlers there than any other region. Mohammed Mossadegh, Iran's nationalist prime minister, was the first to be portrayed as Hitler. Then it was Gamal Abdel Nasser's turn. His book, *Philosophy of the Revolution*, was described by the U.S. media, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, as an Arab equivalent of *Mein Kampf*. Then Yasir Arafat was portrayed as Hitler. Most people do not recall that until he made his dramatic visit to Israel ... even Anwar Sadat was routinely portrayed as a fascist; allegations were dredged up of his links with the Nazis.<sup>65</sup>

The extremely rich symbolic capital of World War II just spilled off in incredible analogies. Its script overlaid the understanding of events. "Like Hitler, the seemingly mad butcher of Baghdad cowered in his German-built *Führerbunker* as he directed his almost *Waffen-SS*—like Republican Guards to fight to the last man. Whereas Hitler gassed millions of Jews in sealed death chambers and rocketed Allied cities with V-1s and V-2s, Saddam shot SCUDs against Israel, where Jews sat in sealed rooms wearing gas masks against chemical warheads made possible by West German-built factories in Iraq..."<sup>66</sup> When a story distributed by Interfax reported that Saddam Hussein had had his top air force commander executed on 24 January 1991, the Iraqi government denied and even the coalition admitted that it could not verify the news. But the story had been sent out already and the Gulf War got its "nearest equivalent to a Stauffenberg plot."<sup>67</sup> The official announcement of *Desert Storm* war was coined in paraphrasing Eisenhower's famous radio address on June 6, 1944, when Fitzwater said "The liberation of Kuwait has begun."<sup>68</sup>

Acting as the anti-appeaser meant that Bush had emulated Churchill and not Chamberlain. Expectedly, on his victory speech on 6 March 1991, "President Bush said that the war must lead to a world, in the words of Winston Churchill, 'in which the principles of justice and and fair play... protect the weak against the strong...'"<sup>69</sup> Taken away by this world, one writer seems even to prefer Nazi Germany to Iraq:

To pursue the natural (sic!) analogy with Nazi practices, the Republican Guard is reminiscent of the early military wing of the SS, which was Hitler's personal bodyguard unit. The expansion of the Republican Guard to an elite fighting force certainly recalls the creation of the *Waffen SS*, through the result was much less impressive. The use of the Republican Guard cadres to preclude mass surrenders by threatening to shoot soldiers certainly parallels the SS role. There are, of course, differences of degree; a British analyst observed that Saddam and his government resembled the Nazis "but without their human warmth".<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction. Potent of a New Century," in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds), *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> Timothy W. Luke, "The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment", p. 331.

<sup>67</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 250.

<sup>69</sup> Timothy W. Luke, "The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment", p. 335.

<sup>70</sup> Norman Friedman, *Desert Victory*, pp. 20-21.

*Interaction between scripts and preference formation: the social construction of US options*

Consequently, Saddam Hussein is presented as someone who is potentially not satisfiable and who wants the complete control of the region. Following the inner logic of the script, the only real US option was Iraq's unconditional surrender or war. Any discussion with the Iraqi government, assuming such had been possible, would have been immediately suspect to appeasement. It seems that the perception of Saddam Hussein in these terms reduced the options of the US government. Not because of "objective" constraints, but for the mobilisation of its foreign policy habitus, the administration was finally pushed to behave exactly as the "logic of power" of a Neorealist security analysis would expect them to do: shifts in the global and regional balance of power were confronting a regional and global hegemon and needed to be sorted out in a war in which the successful translation of superior US power resources into influence decided in favour of the US.

With the material at hand today, it is impossible to decide if the US, making a rational calculation of means and ends in global and regional affairs, wanted "surrender or war" from the beginning, or if the logic of the Second World War script was increasingly "governing" perception and action of the Western actors in the conflict. It seems that US preferences and aims expanded during the conflict much in concomitance with the Second World War-Cold War containment script. The mutual effecting between the script and foreign policy practice cannot be ruled out. "Once accepted, a metaphorical view becomes the organizing conception into which the public thereafter arranges items of news that fit and the light of which it interprets the news. In this way a particular view is reinforced and repeatedly seems to be validated for those whose attitudes it expresses. It becomes self-perpetuating."<sup>71</sup>

At the beginning, there was the over-riding anti-appeasement symbol. It meant, to believe President Bush himself on the day of his 8 August speech, the containment of Iraqi forces at the Saudi border, not necessarily the "roll-back" of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.<sup>72</sup> This tension has been always underlying US containment policies. When the change in the legitimation of the deployment from oil security to nuclear proliferation shifted a majority of public opinion in favour of the intervention, the Second World War script might have taken off. The Iraqi bomb was a symbol that recalled the Manhattan Project and the ultimate war effort against Germany. From this point, to the unconditional retreat as a prerequisite for any negotiation was added another US condition: the crisis would be pursued until a solution for the ABC capacities of Iraq was found. On 25 November 1990, Secretary of Defence Cheney declared that even if Iraq accepted all the resolutions, the US had to deal with Iraqi sophisticated weapon systems in a way to ask for more incisive resolutions. This is perfectly logical if Hussein is like Hitler, because the aim is no longer the containment of an army but the destruction of an irridentist

<sup>71</sup> Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action. Mass Arousal and Quiescence*, p. 72.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 93.

enemy. Secretary of State Baker said on 11 December 1990, that the crisis would only end after the dismantlement of Iraqi mass destructive weaponry. Thus, attentive observers could analyse the extension of war aims already before the starting of *Desert Storm*.<sup>73</sup> From here, it is only one step to a strategy of pre-emptive war. Cheney himself declared on 3 December 1990 to the Senate's Committee of Military Affairs that it was better to face Saddam Hussein now with a coalition united and his weapon systems not finished.<sup>74</sup>

This implies that US war goals expanded beyond the *status quo ante* to include the destruction of Iraq or at least of its mass-destruction weaponry. The doubling of armed forces in the Gulf at the beginning of November already indicated the US resolve for *Desert Storm*. This, in turn, made a political solution short of complete Iraqi submission impossible. This solution became therefore the "nightmare scenario", a nightmare in particular for Saudi Arabia: Iraq would retreat with all its forces intact. This would have meant expensive and permanent stationing of US troops. This *became* the content of the anti-appeasement option which was ruled out from the second day of the crisis.

A belief system explanation would reduce this line of analysis to the individual level, pointing to the cognitive map or belief system of President Bush. One observer is pushed to describe George Bush as riddled with complexes for being considered a "wimp" and therefore easily influenced by solicitations like Thatcher's. Quoting several speeches where Bush personalised the war, Smith concludes that "it was as if foreign policy had become presidential autobiography. The crisis became a struggle of will between George Bush in Washington and Saddam Hussein in Baghdad: ... he was proving to himself that he could stand up to Saddam."<sup>75</sup> Other commentators link it *also* to the legalist tradition of US policy-making, where aggression should not pay and which was used in World War II, which was the time when Bush was politically socialised.<sup>76</sup>

The governance account stresses instead the increasingly reduced options offered by the Hitler analogy which mobilised public opinion, feeded back into action/perception which reinforced, in turn, the disposition to privilege this script. It would also point to the legitimacy content of the Hitler analogy. If Hussein is like Hitler, than no diplomacy could have avoided war. Here the Hitler analogy becomes both the guide for politics and its legitimation. If Hussein were not Hitler, the US could have initialised a policy of compensation, in harmony with the immediate pre-conflict behaviour. With a Hitler this is not possible. Within the Hitler story, the unavoidable US war against Iraq appears as the last attempt of the US to manage and contain expansionist Iraq (to give it time to

<sup>73</sup> Arnold Hottinger, "Die Golf-Krise am Rande des Krieges", *Europa Archiv* (1/1991), p. 3, and p. 6, n. 6. Strangely, the French Minister of Defence, Jean-Pierre Chevènement seems only to have deduced from the targets of the air-attacks, i.e. from the 20 January 1991, that the war aim was the destruction of Iraqi military power. See "Ce qui manque à notre république...", p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Michael T. Klare, "Obiettivo Iraq. La strategia militare nella guerra del Golfo", *Il Manifesto*, 17 February 1991, pp. 6-7.

<sup>75</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War*, pp. 2, 233.

<sup>76</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 86-87. For the legalist script, see next section.

resume reasonableness) and only to strike when there was no alternative. *The Second World War script is most powerful in mobilising consent for a war that the script itself constructs as unavoidable and thus legitimate.*

Once the Second World War script overlaid other interpretation of the events, the story neatly follows: if Hussein is like Hitler, then Kuwait is Rheinland, then the future invasion of Saudi Arabia is Czechoslovakia and negotiation is appeasement, then war is unavoidable. Taking on board the lessons of Vietnam, war had to be fought with little casualties, and with international blessing so as to avoid the US isolation. All these options are the “natural” outgrowth of experienced statesmanship.

Therefore, Hussein had to die. The thesis that the US decided to kill Saddam Hussein with a special bomb the day before the end of the war has immediate appeal.<sup>77</sup> The decision not to go to Baghdad becomes the “natural” debate at the end of the conflict: it is the most explicit break with the Second World War script. The way it will be analysed will hence, in turn, influence how the Second World War script will be reproduced through the Second Gulf War.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion: A ritualised return to 1945 to overcome the ... Arab Syndrome?

The text of World War II can become a prescriptive code or strategic script, whose subplots, characters, and narrative structure are continually cited and coded to create policies of collective defense, regional unity, and national security.

Timothy W. Luke,  
“The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment”, pp. 333-34.

This chapter has shown phenomena of governance that are concerned with practices’ capacity to mobilise and reproduce dispositions *within* a given field. It showed how metaphors contribute to the understanding of events and their legitimisation. It touched the way layers of the collective memory mobilised actions or perceptions.

The previous chapter found a conceptual void of US foreign policy practices and the effects internal readaptation can have on other practices. Perfectly compatible with this finding, the present chapter has followed how the Second Gulf War symbolically brought the US back to 1945. In a context of perceived “hegemonic decline”, “this retrowar rhetoric blended contemporary images of triumph with a rebirth of World War II historical importance for the United States... The global war against Saddam, therefore, was everywhere — in school, at the grocery store, in fast-food outlets, on TV and radio — as

<sup>77</sup> The U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, pp. 36, claims that the US produced a special bomb to pierce Saddam Hussein’ armored personal bunker at al-Taji Air base approximately 15 miles northwest of Baghdad.

<sup>78</sup> Timothy W. Luke, “The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment”, p. 338.

a total environment, an electronic mantra to refocus the nation's citizens as truly loyal fans eager to "kick butt" and "be number one" after being humiliated."<sup>79</sup>

Possibly US intransigence, but certainly the legitimacy of its acts were enhanced by the persistent overlay of these scripts. The mobilisation of the wealth of symbols has certainly also been done on purpose, but at some point Bush, the public, and the experts seemed not to think any longer that the Hussein-Hitler and Bush-Churchill analogy were only metaphorical.

World War II was mobilised to overcome the Vietnam Syndrome, not on the Middle Eastern front, where the war imitated many features of the Vietnam War<sup>80</sup>, but at home.

if we can selflessly confront evil for the sake of good in a land so far away, then surely we can make this land all that it should be," because even as the troops of Desert Storm confronted an enemy abroad they accomplished "more than even they may realize ... they transformed a nation at home"<sup>81</sup>

But maybe it was the "Arab" Syndrome that was being fought against. It is the region where the US was most humiliated recently, both in Iran (hostages) and Lebanon. It was to remove the impression that the US was not able to win against the "Arab threat" (fundamentalists). Again the Hitler symbol is a perfect link between the idea of totalitarianism — Hitler Hussein - and Arab fundamentalism. Although Saddam Hussein had been himself fighting fundamentalism, this metaphor worked well, especially when Saddam Hussein invoked the *jihad*. By symbolically returning to 1945, the Second Gulf War overlaid the script of the Arab fundamentalist threat.

It is impossible to judge already how the different scripts have been affected by this mobilisation during the Second Gulf War. The very impression of a "defining moment" will probably add the Second Gulf War as another layer to the collective memory both of stateman and of their observers. For this layer, the US by mobilising these scripts, together with its insitutional power in the coding, transferring, and interpreting of symbols, "has asked for, and perhaps even won, the freedom and authority to redefine itself and the world as a part of the war. Here, Kuwait is the discursive stage for a semiowar of US identity, purpose and meaning."<sup>82</sup> The extent to which "the US", in particular "which" US won in the reproduction of these scripts remains the subject for future analysis of governance. There, the observers' interpretations will play a major role.

<sup>79</sup> Timothy W. Luke, "The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment", p. 332.

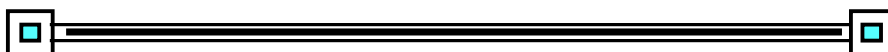
<sup>80</sup> Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh, "How Kuwait was won. Strategy in the Gulf War".

<sup>81</sup> George Bush quoted in Timothy W. Luke, "The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment", p. 335.

<sup>82</sup> Timothy W. Luke, "The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment", p. 337.

# 14

## Ritualised understanding: Realist puzzle-solving



Not only actors but also observers mobilised dispositions to understand the Second Gulf War. In that respect, the competent analyst is as important as the statesman in shaping “the lessons” of the event, i.e. what should be kept in collective memory. For the practice of academics, the analysis of governance returns to Kuhn’s concept of paradigm as a form of *Weltanschauung* that provides the prism for the construction of the event, the research framework, the legitimate way to answer them and, finally, the particular “unexplained” puzzles.

By applying the third facet of governance analysis to the practice of the observer, the present chapter breaks even more with a unilinear presentation of the conflict. It introduces explicitly a level of self-reflexivity. Indeed, as a case illustration, the prior individual power analysis of the Second Gulf War will be in itself analysed as an instance of governance. Taking power seriously supplements the Neorealist research agenda not only because it shows power phenomena neglected by Neorealist power analysis, but also because it shows Neorealist power analysis, as any form of power analysis in a power-centered practice as IR, to be a power phenomenon as such. By constructing a particular story where the focus is either on the low fungibility or the translation efficacy of US power (as a way to overcome the “paradox of unrealised power” after Vietnam), it “authorises” the Realists’ research agenda on major powers. The focus on miscalculations and conspiracies which is the logical outgrowth of Neorealist power analysis, seems, however, rather limited compared with the forgoing discussion of the adaptation crisis of established practices.

In a second step, an example of an analysis of the Second Gulf War will show how interpretation is framed by the application of dichotomies that references to Realism implicitly evoke, as for instance, the Realist-Idealist divide, the isolationist-interventionist divide, the Neorealist structuralist-reductionist divide, and the just-war debate.

## 1. The silent construction of puzzles: overrationalised power translations

The translation dynamics of Neorealist power analysis contrasts an ideal outcome, constructed by the distribution of capabilities and their aggregation, with the actual case. In instances of a total match, we would have the ideal-type of a systemic balance-of-power explanation: the distribution of capabilities corresponds to the distribution of actual power and explains the outcome. Foreign policy analysis is redundant in such a case because the actors can be assumed to have made the situational optimal calculation of their means and ends, their "National Interest", and their rational behaviour aggregates to a collective action which is determined by the balance of power among them. In all other cases, which are certainly most, if not all, real cases, the distribution of capabilities does not explain the outcome. Consequently, many scholars, such as for instance Baldwin or Keohane and Nye, extended the concept and analysis of power to investigate the conversion of capabilities into influence over outcomes. Here, foreign policy analysis and regimes are crucial to seeing how the distribution of power was translated into the assessment of national securities and interests, channelled via regimes and finally, how skillful the capabilities were applied.

The comparison of the foreign policy account with the "rational" story provides the argumentative structure. If "irrational" behaviour is shown in the account of the case, then the analysis will try to put it in order. As we have seen in the argument on burden-sharing and coalition management in the Gulf Conflict, suboptimal outcomes can be explained to be the result of collective action problems. On the unit-level, unexpected behaviour can be for instance erratic or contradictory policy moves or the negligence of capabilities that would have made a difference. These differences between the ideal and actual case produce the "puzzles of the account".

Yet, the power-dynamic approach might overrationalise what actually happened. This is an inbuilt tendency of the entire perspective with its concentration on initial capabilities, their translation into interests and strategies, and into outcomes. Overrationalisations can exist at all levels. First, in the awareness of capabilities (miscalculations); then whether they are used efficiently or not (irrational behaviour); finally, in their impact on the outcome (regime bias). The analysis is pushed toward *ex-post* rationalisations or overrationalisations. Power-centered explanations will never get out of the Neorealist dilemma: *either, as shown by this account, to run the risk of attributing too much purpose and "master-plans" to fortuitous actions, or to disregard power effects that cannot be linked to intentional policies.* But most importantly, all these can change during and because of the conflict. *The biggest overrationalisation is the one attaching constant capabilities, constant interests and strategies and the concentration on one specific outcome.*

This section will extensively analyse the major power-puzzles because, as might be expected, they have also been at the center stage of the analysis of the war. With the hindsight of the very clear outcome of the conflict, the inability of the US to deter the invasion in Kuwait, Saddam Hussein's persistence in going to war and the US reluctance to go to Baghdad have spurred most debate.



### 1.1. US diplomacy — an invitation or a trap for Iraq?

The Middle East is riddled with conspiracy theories. But far from being alien to the American officials' mind, as one US commentator likes to stress<sup>1</sup>, they are very much alive in the scripts which the war mobilized. They are also consistently reproduced in Western popular culture through spy novels and films which in turn affect the way reality is screened.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore not fortuitous that commentators saw this parallel in the post-war analyses: "Aux deux dimensions déjà connues du drame, celle d'un racket financier raté suivi d'une croisade musclée réussie s'ajoutait une dimension non moins négatrice du politique, celle d'un (mauvais) roman d'espionnage."<sup>3</sup>

But conspiracy theories are also the logical outcome of attempts to persistently rationalize the inexplicable. The diplomatic failure of the US to deter the Iraqi invasion has been often looked upon with suspicion. On the one hand, the US was militarily preparing an answer to a possible Iraqi attack on the Arab peninsula (see chapter 9.3.). On the other hand, the US have been diplomatically accommodating the Iraqi government for years, possibly inducing Saddam Hussein's regime to believe "that it should become the strategic partner of the USA in the Middle East after the end of the conflict with Iran, provided the USA removed its forces from the Gulf region."<sup>4</sup> To make sense of both in power terms, either the US inefficiently used its diplomatic capabilities and was constrained to go to war or it was efficiently preparing a specific war-environment to use its capabilities in the best possible conditions. Since (1) the utilitarian power approach is characterised by a focus on how actors use, implement and realise their policy instruments within or between specific regimes, and since (2) foreign policies make up for inconsistencies between the structural origins and the outcome, the whole story tends to see the main actors as prime movers and masterminds.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of governance would look at the way such a disposition is mobilised unwittingly; it would look at the way conspiracy theories, and those who handle them, are legitimated.

#### *US signalling "green light" to Iraq*

The history of the failed US diplomacy starts with the end of the First Gulf war. On 9 August 1988, one day after the Iran-Iraq cease-fire, Kuwait decided to increase oil production, in violation of OPEC accords. On top of this, it pumped oil from the disputed Rumalia field. Iraq calculated that the cut in oil prices would cost Iraq roughly as much

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Pipes, "Dealing with Middle Eastern Conspiracy Theories", *Orbis. A Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Winter 1992), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> This is a point stressed by James Der Derian, "The Intertextual Power of International Intrigue", in his *Antidiplomacy: Spies, Terror, Speed, and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 40-70.

<sup>3</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe, un an après l'invasion du Kuwait", p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> George Joffe, "Middle Eastern views of the Gulf conflict", p. 182.

<sup>5</sup> As such they can be used as tools for a more efficient foreign policy, a form of indirect power which consciously mobilizes this disposition, because "[w]orrying about foreign intrigue unwittingly imbues the foreigner with power. See "Daniel Pipes, "Dealing with Middle Eastern Conspiracy Theories", p. 52.

as its debt-service to Kuwait.<sup>6</sup> From this point onwards, tensions between Kuwait and Iraq were mounting, of which the US government was aware.

Yet the US government tried to uphold its accommodatory policy toward Iraq, “aid to moderate”, until the end. It was initiated on 7 March 1980, when the UN Commission of Human Rights, in which the USA is influential, did not take action on a proposal to enquire into Human Rights abuses in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> On 26 February 1982, it took Iraq off the list of terrorist nations. Countries on this list are prohibited from receiving government-financed export credits and are subject to restrictive controls on arms sales and technology exports. Within months the Iraq received over \$US 400 million in Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to finance US agricultural exports. By November 1984, full diplomatic relations were restored.<sup>8</sup> Since the beginning of 1982, the Pentagon three times invited Iraq to swap US arms for Soviet tanks and helicopters. With the CCC, Iraq became the US’s third largest trading partner in the Middle East - after Israel and Saudi Arabia — (buying \$US 4.4 billions worth of goods in the first quarter of 1990), the single largest overseas consumer of US rice (the USA has sold as much as 20 per cent of its annual crop to Iraq) and one of the largest importers of US corn, wheat, and other grains. The Iraqis were on the receiving end of what the columnist James Ridgeway called “a market-driven quest to relieve the Republican heartland” of Midwestern farmers to weather a depression that pushed down the price of farm commodities throughout the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> Between 1985 and 1990, Iraq received over \$US 4 billion in US-guaranteed agricultural exports.<sup>10</sup> These credit lines and the opposition to sanctions were due to the lobbying of the Washington-based US-Iraq Business Forum that also organised trips for US businessmen including a private audience with Saddam Hussein. The scandal of the BNL showed not only \$3 billion of unauthorised loans to Iraq, but also irregularities of the CCC-insured dealings handled by the BNL (bribes refunneled to pay hidden arms deals). The secret funding must have been known to US authorities<sup>11</sup> (see Table 14.1 for other US “carrots” for Iraq). Thus, in an attempt to continue diplomatically “business-as-usual”, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs John Kelly visited Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on 12 February 1990. He assured him that the US wanted to improve relations with Iraq.

Notwithstanding this, many events darkened US-Iraqi relations. Western governments were increasingly concerned about Iraqi domestic policies. Bazoft, an Iranian-born journalist working for *The Observer*, was arrested in September 1989 while probing into a mysterious explosion at a secret military complex near Baghdad. In March 1990 he was

<sup>6</sup> For this point and for an excellent account of the diplomatic failings before and during the Gulf conflict, see John K. Cooley, “Pre-war Gulf diplomacy”, *Survival*, vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (March-April 1991), p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Enemy of my Enemy ... may still be my Enemy, too”, pp. 11-14.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> This is just another indication of the political economy research programme on governance where domestic social contracts are stabilised abroad.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, p. 9.

**Table 14.1 US “carrots” for Iraq****1. Military or dual use technology exports:**

- between 1985 and 1990, export licenses were granted for 771 sales of technology (\$US 1.5 billion)
- in July 1990, export licenses were approved for computers to the Iraqi Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization (\$US 3.5 billion); flight simulators and associated technology (\$US 1 million); forges and computer equipment usable for the manufacture of 16-inch gun barrels.
- encouragement or tacit consent to other countries (France) or arms broker supplying weapons to Iraq
- channeling of US weapons via other states (Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait)

**2. CCC credit guarantees:**

- \$US 5 billion between 1982 and 1990.

**3. Export-Import Bank guarantees:**

- \$US 300 million

**4. Protection from US sanction bills:**

- economic sanctions approved unanimously by the US Senate in the prevention of Genocide Act of 1988 were opposed by the Reagan administration and never passed.
- repeated attempts to impose agricultural sanctions on Iraq were continually opposed by the Reagan and Bush administration, by House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, House Minority Leader Robert Michel, Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin
- on 12 April Senator Robert Dole led a Senatorial delegation to Baghdad which criticised Saddam Hussein, but quite relieved not to impose any sanction that would hurt US agricultural states

Source: Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Enemy of my Enemy ... may Still be my Enemy, too”, pp. 21, 24, 28, 30, 32.)

put on trial on charges of espionage and executed shortly afterwards. Human Rights infringements by the Iraqi government were also repeatedly condemned by the US State Department’s annual reports on Human Rights since 1988. On 21 February 1990, the annual report included 12 pages criticising Iraq in particular for its treatment of Kurds.<sup>12</sup>

Iraq, on the other hand, was alerted by several actions, including the US-UK “sting” operation in 1990, in which 40 US-made capacitors, called krytons (triggering devices) were seized. On 22 March 1990, a Canadian engineer, Gerald Bull, was murdered in Brussels. He was supposed to help Iraq construct a so-called “super-gun”, of which components were seized in several European harbours in April.<sup>13</sup> In several speeches, Saddam Hussein issued threats to the West: on 24 February during the Arab Co-operation Council meeting in Amman, where he complained about the US presence in the Gulf; on 2 April in a speech to the Iraqi forces, where he threatened to “burn half of Israel” with

<sup>12</sup> John K. Cooley, “Pre-war Gulf diplomacy”, p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> In an internationally concerted action, parts were seized in Teesport, Athens, Istanbul, London, and Naples. In Geoffrey Kemp, “The Gulf Crisis: diplomacy or force?”, *Survival*, vol. XXXII, no. 6 (November-December 1990), p. 515, the author believes that the gun was to be 131 feet long with a range of approximately 1600 km and that it might also be used to send a satellite into orbit.

chemical weapons, if it was to attack Iraq, and on 30 May during an extraordinary Arab summit. After having applied pressure in the Arab world against Kuwait, Iraq and Iran eventually succeeded (with Saudi help) in making OPEC conform to their wishes on quotas and prices. The price increase to \$US 25/barrell was decided at a preliminary meeting in Jidda on 10 July to be endorsed at the official meeting in Geneva on 24 July. Yet, Kuwait, by announcing the arrangement two days later, added a stipulation in which it reserved to itself the option to review and possibly reverse the decision by fall 1990. In his conversation with Ambassador Glaspie, Saddam Hussein confirmed this when he said that “we received some intelligence that they were talking of sticking to the agreement for two months only.”<sup>14</sup> This public announcement made the whole OPEC decision meaningless, because it, in effect, told major buyers to wait until October.<sup>15</sup>

After this humiliation, Iraq seems to have decided on a military confrontation. On 16 July, in a long memorandum to the President of the Arab League, Tareq Aziz complained officially about Kuwaiti behaviour and issued threats which were confirmed the next day in Saddam Hussein’s address to the nation. In this way, the Iraq-Kuwaiti conflict became public: “He had committed himself in such a way that any compromise on his part would have been seen as a humiliating capitulation.”<sup>16</sup>

In this context, some US diplomatic moves of the last two weeks had furthered doubts about US intentions. They were made in perfect knowledge that Iraq had already massed 100.000 troops at the Kuwaiti border. It starts with a declaration of the State Department’s spokeswoman for the Middle East, Mrs Margaret Tutwiller, on 24 July. She declared that, on the one hand, the US had no defence agreement with Kuwait but that, on the other hand, it would support friends in the region with whom it had long-standing ties — which implied Kuwait. Saddam Hussein, apparently insecure how to interpret the US position, summoned the US Ambassador to Iraq. April Glaspie confirmed the official line that the US had no position on the border dispute. On the same 25 July, the *Washington Post*, considered a quasi-official organ by the Iraqi authorities, quoted a senior official saying that the US would not go to war if Iraq occupied a small amount of Kuwaiti territory.<sup>17</sup> It is quite difficult to conceive that the US did not realise that these declarations were both inviting Iraq’s invasion and not giving any incentive to the Kuwaitis to compromise. On 28 July, in response to Ambassador Glaspie’s report, President Bush cabled to Saddam Hussein that the US had no opinion on inner-Arab border disputes. Iraq did certainly not miss the testimony by Assistant Secretary John Kelly before the Middle East subcommittee of the House on 31 July. Again, he insisted that the US had no defence treaty with Gulf states. The *BBC World Service* brought the news immediately. The *Financial Times*

<sup>14</sup> “The Glaspie-Hussein Transcript”, in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (eds), *Beyond the Storm. A Gulf Crisis Reader* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), p. 396.

<sup>15</sup> This point has been repeated by Tareq Aziz in an interview given to the *New Yorker* on 24 June 1991. See John Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, “Why Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait”, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> For this paragraph, see Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush’s War*, p. 51, 53, 59.

confirmed the next day. The US was not deterring a possible invasion (by 27 July it was considered “likely” by the CIA). Therefore, the most rational interpretation is that the US expected and could accept a “limited” invasion.

Unless one espouses the conspiracy theory that the United States wanted Iraq to invade Kuwait as an excuse to crush Saddam Hussein, then surely the simplest explanation is that the Bush administration was trying to shove Kuwait into a more tractable posture with regard to the price of oil and possibly to the leasing of the two islands so desired by Iraq for the construction of a deep harbour in the Gulf. Iraq, after all, was a US ally and already a serious trading partner. Nor would the Administration, strongly oriented to the oil lobby, have been at all averse to seeing a hike in prices, which had drifted in real terms below their 1973 level ... In fact by 25 July the CIA had decided that Saddam Hussein wasn't bluffing, predicting that he would confine himself to seizing disputed territory on the Kuwaiti border.<sup>18</sup>

The same appears from the congressional testimony of Ambassador Glaspie in September 1990, where she admits to not having believed that Saddam Hussein would take all of Kuwait. The reporting *New York Times* emphasised the “all”.<sup>19</sup> As long as the archives are not open, the interpretation will remain speculative. A rational actor approach would suppose that if the US agreed to such a course of action, its most likely outcome, namely a new border and money settlement, would stabilise the region in terms judged favorable to the US. Yet this most rational ex post account which attributes a coherence to the different acts is not very rational in an a priori means-ends calculus: the result of limited change could very probably have been obtained by direct pressure on Kuwait, or by shouldering Egypt's and Saudi Arabia's efforts to provide an Arab solution.

#### *Conspiracy against Iraq ?*

The fact that there was a strong resistance against any Arab diplomacy (at least after the second day of the conflict) *and* that there are sources which would indicate US and British encouragement of Kuwaiti intransigence, evoke, however, the suspicion of a trap. It is one thing to leave the regional security complex some space to manoeuvre indicating a US benevolence to a partial rearrangement of the border dispute between Kuwait and Iraq. It is another story if Kuwaiti intransigence has been provoked by its Western allies. This would imply that the US and the UK *wanted* an armed solution to the conflict. Several sources suggest exactly this.<sup>20</sup> During a meeting between Jassir Arafat and the Kuwaiti Crown Prince in July 1990, which also dealt with the border/debt question between Kuwait and Iraq, the Prince is said to have received a phone call from Margaret Thatcher urging him to stand firm assuring him of unconditional support from the UK and the US. With regard to the last minute meeting in Jeddah on 31 July, another report notes that the

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Claude Julien, “Fauteurs de guerre?”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, vol. 37, no. 439 (October 1990), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> For the following, see David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, pp. 46-47.

Emir instructed his negotiators to maintain an unwavering position which was said to conform with the opinion of Egypt, the US and the UK. Finally, the Iraq government, in an attempt to delegitimize the Kuwaiti government, released a secret document they had found after the invasion in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The document indicated the common US-Kuwaiti attempt to use Iraqi economic weaknesses for political concessions. It is supposed to be a protocol which the Kuwaiti director-general of state security had formulated after his meeting with the CIA Director William Webster on 14 November 1989. The CIA confirmed that there had been a meeting in November 1989 but declared the document a forgery. Its denial did, however, not say that such a discussion had never taken place, but only that there was no discussion at this particular meeting.

But why should the UK and the US try to provoke a war? There are at least two plausible explanations, one on the domestic and the other on the regional security level. The first is linked to the beneficial effects of recession wars, if won, on domestic public support and economic growth.<sup>21</sup> There have been, so the argument runs, several US recession-war cycles: the post-war recession and the Korean War, the 69-70 recession and the US escalation in Vietnam (Cambodia), the 1979 recession and Carter's start of the Second Cold War, and the 1981-82 recession and Reagan's military Keynesianism. The recession at the beginning of the 90s was severe: Germany's unification bubble started to burst, in Japan growth rates had declined, and importantly the Japanese stock market declined by 40% in 1990, which made Japanese investors repatriate their money so as to balance losses at home - at a time when the US most needed Japanese capital. President Bush was at a low because he could not keep his electoral promises. A rallying war and its successful conduct would be a welcome chance to boost national support. In the recession-ridden UK, the situation was hardly any better. The unpopular Tory government might not only have thought to repeat the Falkland experience, but the City of London depended on the sustained financial support by the Gulf investors."<sup>22</sup> Although not necessarily a long-term plan to go to war, in the last weeks before the conflict the UK and the US administrations took the chance to redeem their declining image.

The second explanation is an analogy to the Yom Kippur/October war in 1973. As already mentioned, there have been hypotheses that the US wanted Egypt to invade, to manage a war in which Israel would for the first time not win, but due to US help, not lose either, in order to be able to forge new solutions when the iron was still hot. In this reading, Baker's Middle East initiatives, the Madrid Conference (and also the Washington Accords) are the logical outcome of a master strategy to stabilise the regional security complex (see chapter 10). On both occasions, the US could use its role as the main defender of Israel in order to extract some concessions. On top of this and completely unexpectedly, the PLO left the conflict so weakened internationally, that diplomatic successes became crucial for Arafat's and *El Fatah's* leadership within the Palestinian camp.

<sup>21</sup> André Gunder Frank, "Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...", p. 269.

<sup>22</sup> André Gunder Frank, "Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...", p. 276.

But both these explanations, the latter a bit less than the former, contradict the other story in which a partial invasion would certainly not have been met with full-fledged war by the allied forces. Nevertheless, the important governance point to note here is that the initial power-puzzle, why the superior power of the US did not deter Iraq, prompted a series of research questions which are considered the center of the debate - which is just another indicator how power analysis and politics have become naturalised in IR. The expertise that researchers acquire, is to distinguish the more or less probable rationalisations that often, not only for the lacking archive material or psychoanalysis of the decision makers, are grounded on the “reasonability” of their arguments, which, in turn, are conventionally judged by the practice of academic observers. The paradigm prefers or empowers particular ways of answering puzzles, which does not preclude, as we have just seen, a critical position with regard to the “powerful” in IR.

*The Korea script — or who trapped whom into Kuwait?*

One of the ways to appear more authoritative is through recourse to historical analogies, especially if this mobilises the lessons of the past in the collective memory of the practice. This means that one can go on spinning stories of *ex-post* rationalisations and conspiracies. After all, it was not President Bush, but the government of Kuwait which set off the conflict dynamic. Here the observer’s understanding of the conflict became overlaid with another script, the Korean war.

The first parallel is with the historic speech by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who defined the Korean peninsula as not of “vital interest” to the US.<sup>23</sup> Post-war historiography considered this one of the triggers of the Korean war because it could be read as an official declaration that the US would not intervene. There was no deterrence, because the superior means were not to be used. Or, turned ironically, the miscalculation stems from the fact that “peace-loving peoples frequently fail to make clear their determination to resist aggression and to impress potential aggressors with the consequences they must expect should they once take the path of violence.”<sup>24</sup>

Another analogy concerns Kuwait’s and South Korea’s behaviour before and during the crisis. Tired of the Iraqi government’s permanent claims, the Kuwaiti rulers might have decided to use the US to get rid of the Iraqi threat: the Kuwait government’s intransigence acted as the catalyst for a US intervention. This theme replays again a feature of the Korean war, where during the first offensive of North Korean troops, commentators believed that South Korea showed an insufficient defence capacity on purpose to prompt US intervention. Again the same idea that so-called powerless states have an interest in escalation if they would find an outside power whose interests would be harmed by passivity on *higher* stakes in the escalation ladder.

<sup>23</sup> Claude Julien, “Fauteurs de guerre?”, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Robert C. Tucker and David Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 44.

This argument has been provoked by several events. As already mentioned with regard of the OPEC agreement in July 1990, on several crucial moments, Kuwait did not show any willingness to compromise. In a last-minute meeting on 31 July and 1 August in Jeddah, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia tried to broker a settlement of the Iraq-Kuwait disputes. Since the Emir of Kuwait was not part of the Kuwaiti delegation, an evident snubbing of the whole matter, Saddam Hussein did not attend either. Iraq asked Kuwait for a \$US 10 billion gift or loan. Kuwait offered \$US 9 billion, and King Fahd the remaining billion. When Fahd and Hussein had retired, the Kuwaiti Crown Prince Saad wanted to link the loan to a settlement of the border dispute. Iraqi representatives refused and threatened to get the money by other means.

“Don’t make threats”, answered Saad. “Kuwait has powerful friends. We have allies too. You will be forced to pay the money you owe us.” Those were the final words spoken face to face. Next day, delegates left without an agreed communique.<sup>25</sup>

For all those that do not believe in this kind of conspiracy theory, this might sound far-fetched. It is, however, the logical consequence of power-centered explanations that accept the perspective of the policy makers. If power is to explain the outcome, once the outcome is known, the whole story is reconstructed to allow for the translation of the distribution of power via actor’s behaviour into the outcome. This produces explanations which attach a lot of knowledge and control to actors. This is the Machiavellian core of power-centered intentionalist explanations, taking the word in its received usage. The extrication and weighing of these “intriguing” rationalisations is one of the most positively sanctioned puzzle-solving in IR/IPE.

## 1.2. Miscalculations, nightmare scenarios and Neorealist ex-post explanations

Whereas the foregoing section dealt with power-puzzles as explanations of miscalculation before the outset of the conflict, once the conflict starts, power analysis will focus on the irrational use of the power resources at hand. Yet, since the conflict had two beginnings, namely the invasion of Kuwait and then the “liberation of Kuwait” which were separated by diplomatic manoeuvres designed to avoid the war, there were again possibilities for resource miscalculations. Indeed, the US (apparently?) enormously overestimated the Iraqi forces. But there were also real translation-puzzles in the Neorealist power analysis when Iraq did not succeed in making the “nightmare scenario” come true, i.e. leaving Kuwait with all its forces intact, and when the US stopped short of dethroning Saddam Hussein.

### *The invisible army*

It was with incredulity that commentators looked at the Iraqi military disasters. Was this the heroic army we were told of some months ago? The 4th or 5th biggest in the world?

<sup>25</sup> John K. Cooley, “Pre-war Gulf diplomacy”, p. 128.



Either Iraq was not as powerful as initially thought, or just incompetent or both. The initial puzzle is, then, to assess the initial power resources.

The easiest exercise consists in showing that the initial calculation has overestimated the actual Iraqi force. Such a reassessment already plasters over some of the most visible discrepancies between the expectations of the initial balance of power and the actual outcome. Iraq was supposed to have an army of 955.000 men, the world fourth largest. At the beginning of the war, the Pentagon estimated that 545.000 troops were in or near Kuwait. This calculation was based on the number of division sent. Yet, it turned out that they were undermanned. Reports of Iraqi prisoners gave the impression that around 350.000 were in the Kuwaiti “theatre”<sup>26</sup>, of which around 100.000 seem to have deserted, leaving the total number around 250.000<sup>27</sup> or even only 183.000.<sup>28</sup>

Often, this recalculation is mixed with a critique of US overkill in the conflict or suspicions of hidden Pentagon (or other) interests. “[The US] did so deliberately, to help justify the carpet and terror bombing of both the military and civilian ‘assets’ of this Third World country of a population of only 17 million souls.”<sup>29</sup> As in all conspiracies, this might be true, but not necessarily so. First, Iraqi propaganda did everything to amplify its supposed military might, also because it was playing on the Vietnam Syndrome, and the negative experiences in the Middle East, not the least in the disastrous Reagan intervention in Lebanon. Then, since there is no measure of power, power miscalculations should be expected for at least three reasons. Cold War years should have accustomed us to “worst-case” thinking which implies systematic overestimations of the “enemy’s” side.<sup>30</sup> On top of it, security threats need to be dramatic, so common wisdom has it, to stimulate a response from public opinion. Finally, the arms bazaar and the military-industrial complex sometimes help to “awaken” the needs they propose to satisfy. Power calculations are systematically biased, although the extent of mismatch for the Gulf conflict was unusual.

#### *Tareq Aziz’ nightmare*

... no negotiations, no compromises, no attempts at face saving  
and no rewards for aggression.

President Bush, “An Extra Mile for Peace”, 3 January 1991

The worst case for rationality seems, however, Iraq. Once all these diplomatic attempts by the French and Soviet had opened a degree of manoeuvre, the Iraqi government appeared all the more incompetent to translate its resources into influence over outcomes.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Friedman and Efraim Karsh, “How Kuwait Was Won”, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Eugene J. Carroll Jr and Gene R. La Rocque, “Victory in the Desert”, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle*, p. 62 referring to a report by *Washington Post*, 24 April 1992, p. A25.

<sup>29</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, “Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...”, p. 272.

<sup>30</sup> For a typical treatment of such Cold-War overestimations, see Andreas von Bülow, *Die eingebildete Unterlegenheit. Das Kräfteverhältnis West-Ost, wie es wirklich ist* (“The imaginary inferiority. East-West balance of power how it really is”) (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1985).

Here, relational power analysis shifts to looking instead for conversion mistakes. A first version on this miscalculation-theme is the question of why Saddam Hussein did not wait another 18 months before invading Kuwait so as to acquire nuclear capability. *Nota bene*: the question is probably alien to policy makers and analysts in the field. Saddam Hussein had chemical weapons and did not use them in *this* war. It is quite doubtful that he would use them for more than balance of threat with Israel, and even more that he would make his military moves dependent on them, not more than Israel, for instance. Yet, reasonable actions are not the most rational ones for the translation of capabilities into actual influence. In good geostrategic manner, future power capabilities should also be expected to be rationally applied. Therefore, the question becomes sensible. The rationalisation provided is a replay of the origins of the conflict, namely the political and financial situation of Iraq but, most prominently, the Iraqi expectation that neither Saudi Arabia, nor the US would react and that, therefore, waiting was unnecessary.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, the leading theme has become another one: why did Iraq not make the “nightmare scenario” true? By leaving Kuwait after having faced the biggest military coalition since World War II, Saddam Hussein could have kept his formidable military might intact with all its ABC potential. One possibility is that Saddam Hussein was aware of Iraqi inferiority, but believed the war would not happen.<sup>32</sup> This would explain his scant respect for the diplomatic efforts to go “an extra mile for peace”, including the humiliating treatment of the Secretary General of the UN Perez de Cuellar who had to wait several hours before Saddam Hussein received him. At the same time, however, there had been extensive backchannel diplomacy and an increasing awareness of a possible war. Again, the difficulty lies not in assessing whether Saddam Hussein believed in war, but whether or not he changed his ideas before the outbreak of the war.

Therefore, the diplomatic and policy moves have to be scrutinized, in order to derive the options that the Iraqi government thought itself facing at different points of the crisis/war. After the “invitation” to Kuwait and the massive deployment, Iraq seemed to have followed a typical double-track policy: on the one hand preparing a defensive military posture for possible attacks and on the other hand preparing the ground for a diplomatic solution within which it would keep a part of Kuwait. The military defensive posture consisted in two things. First, Iraq tried to secure Iranian neutrality. The price was a treaty accepting the “Talweg” solution in the Schatt-el-Arab, i.e. the reacceptance of the status quo ante of 1981. This dissolved the Eastern front. All the troops could move West, or, as it turned out later, to the core of Iraq to defend the government. This move can either be interpreted as an aggressive troop concentration against the allied forces, or just a defensive action to avoid Iran’s taking advantage of the conflict. Second, Iraq relied on

<sup>31</sup> Martin Indyk, “Watershed in the Middle East”, pp. 70-71.

<sup>32</sup> See also Fred Halliday, “The Gulf War 1990-1991...”, p. 116. This interpretation is fostered by the reports that Evgeni Primakov, the special Soviet emissaire in the Gulf, made after the end of the conflict. For the French discussion of his articles published in the *Pravda* (and later in a book), see Francis Cornu & Michel Tatu, “Les occasions manquées de M. Saddam Hussein”, *Le Monde*, 15 March 1991.

a defence line in Kuwait built in analogy to the First Gulf war. The aim was to inflict high costs to an attacking force, so that it would give up; in short, a war of attrition. Yet, this purely defensive position undermined the dynamic of making military gains and concentrated the army in a small piece of land where it could be easily surrounded.

The backchannel diplomacy had initially placed one condition, the removal of the El-Sabah family from Kuwaiti government. Later, Iraq tried to use the French idea of a link with the Arab-Israeli conflict or of an international Middle East conference. Then, Iraq attempted to show up double standards in the treatment of Israel and of Arab states. This was helped by the incident 8 October 1990, when 19 Palestinians were killed at the Mosq in Jerusalem. Diplomatic offensives to split the coalition through direct appeals to Arab societies were, however, without success. Even when the air attack had started, military means, the Scuds, were used to fragment the coalition by provoking Israel.

Did Iraq want war? Those commentators stressing Iranian neutrality link it with an attempt at joint hegemony in the Gulf, thereby winning Iran on its side. In his declaration on 15 August, Saddam Hussein offered to turn the Gulf into a “Sea of Peace”. Those who stress the freeing of supplementary troops, see Iraq preparing a war.<sup>33</sup> The last version seems less convincing in the light of the fact that Iraq did not attack the coalition forces when, during their initial deployment, they were weakest, and did release the hostages on 6 December who were the best guarantee for Western caution in conducting air raids.<sup>34</sup> This release has been linked to the diplomatic offensive, the “extra mile for peace”, so as to allow the US-proposed meeting in Baghdad between James Baker and Saddam Hussein. Iraq accepted and released the hostages, yet the US cancelled the meeting.<sup>35</sup>

The treaty with Iran had unwillingly diminished Iraq’s options for a negotiated peace. Having given up the already limited gains of a terrible war, Saddam Hussein had to cash in something in exchange. Before leaving Kuwait, Saddam Hussein needed to be assured of at least some minimum gain. US diplomacy had been geared since the middle of August toward an unconditional retreat without any assured linkage to future negotiations. Edgar Pisani, behind-the-scenes emissaire of Mitterrand, expressed the dilemma of the diplomatic solution: Iraq was honestly ready to leave Kuwait — but for something in return. The US wanted Iraq to leave first and then to negotiate. “But negotiate what? No one ever told him.”<sup>36</sup> The more the US could sell this diplomacy as legitimate, the less options were left for Iraq. From the middle of August, the two major opponents would have been hard pressed to find a negotiated solution: it meant either humiliation or war.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 124.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh, “How Kuwait was won”, p. 11. For one commentator, convinced of the “Machiavellian” nature of Saddam Hussein, the analytically disturbing releasing of hostages is ex-post rationalised (or tautologised) as “when the remaining hostages were finally released in December 1990, it was evidently because their usefulness for Saddam has been exhausted.” Why this was “evident” is not discussed. The interpretation of events is biased by the view of the villain which has to be upheld. See Robert Jackson, “Dialectical Justice in the Gulf War”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4 (October 1992), p. 344.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Cockburn & Andrew Cohen, “The Unnecessary War”, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 192.

Once the US had decided on a military intervention, at the latest by the end of October, diplomacy consisted in making (1) diplomatic openings to appease the domestic front and to get a multilateral blessing for military intervention and (2) to stay firm on unconditional retreat from Kuwait. From the point, where the conflict objectives of the US were expanding to include the destruction of Iraqi forces — much in concordance with the World War II script — the avoidance of the “nightmare scenario” became primordial. The only exception would be if Iraq accepted the control and supervision of its weapon systems. The US had to uphold this dilemma of either humiliation or war, indeed, it had to escalate humiliations in order to change the policy priorities of Saddam Hussein such as to make war appear the lesser evil.<sup>37</sup> One instrument repeatedly used was the ultimatum, first for the 15 January, and then when the Soviet diplomacy was making a negotiated withdrawal possible before the land war. Another humiliation was the handling of the Baker-Hussein meeting in Baghdad, to which Iraq had agreed, but which was repeatedly delayed and then finally given up by the US. This diplomacy might explain why the Iraqi ruling elite developed, in the words of Tareq Aziz after the war, “a fatalistic feeling about war; we found ourselves in a position where we could not do anything about it.”<sup>38</sup>

Thus, (domestic) political humiliation or (international) military defeat was the dilemma. It does not seem that Iraq wanted war but that it accepted it as the minor evil. But even then Saddam Hussein’s choice for preferring defeat to humiliation is somewhat irrational. If Hussein repeatedly stressed that the real war-objective of the West was the destruction of Iraq’s military power, he should have avoided any conflict, since he could not have been sure where it would stop. Either he thought he could win until the air bombardements told him the opposite — or he did not take seriously the widely available political discussion about the nightmare scenario: “comme si le chef de l’Etat était le dernier à croire sa propre propagande.”<sup>39</sup> It is here that traditional foreign policy analysis will add the cognitive dimension pointing to the impact the dynamics of crisis have on the decisional context and the individual capacity to choose rationally. “On avait l’impression que l’auto-image de Saddam Hussein tout autant que l’image que ces médias se faisaient de la crise se réfléchissaient mutuellement, se renforçaient l’une l’autre dans un mouvement en spirale presque autonome sans grand rapport avec les véritables données du conflit.”<sup>40</sup>

Yet, this does not explain why Iraq did not try a partial withdrawal so as to preempt war. It is, however, not clear that a partial withdrawal would have changed US plans, nor that Iraq thought that it would change US plans.<sup>41</sup> With the doubling of US troops in the

<sup>37</sup> For a similar view, see Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 90-91. This follows Pierre Hassner’s “golden rule” of foreign policy which is most successful not by trying to force the other’s behaviour to change, but to make his/her priorities shift.

<sup>38</sup> As quoted in Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh, “How Kuwait was won”, p. 9, fn. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Le Golfe: nuages après la tempête”, p. 456.

<sup>40</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Le Golfe, un an après l’invasion du Kuwait”, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 94.

Gulf, it was quite clear that Bush needed a positive result to justify the withdrawal of the deployed forces. US diplomacy offered only one option: complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. All the UN resolutions were voted in this respect. The entire propaganda was that there should be no gain from aggression. Without the historical sources, it is impossible to judge if Iraq did not, to the contrary, finally decide to push for war in which it had more to win than to lose in terms of domestic legitimacy.

In this scenario, once trapped in the lose-lose situation, and thus in war, Iraq's best way out was to avoid political humiliation and to limit military defeat. This would explain the later very limited Iraqi "casualties". It points also to the supreme rationalisation: Bush and Hussein fought a war, in which they would both win. Saddam Hussein faced the West and survived against "the biggest coalition in modern times", whereas George Bush quickly and decisively won, not the war, but the Vietnam Syndrome.<sup>42</sup>

But this could only happen, if the US would not march to Baghdad and destroy the Ba'ath regime. Since Saddam Hussein's behaviour is most rational if he could count on US restraint, expectedly one can find interpretations about Saddam Hussein's master tricks that avoided any further US involvement. Hence

Perhaps their greatest mistake was in expecting the regime to fall after the defeat in Kuwait. Here Saddam outfoxed them all, for prior to the war he led the Americans into a trap which they closed on themselves. By brandishing chemical weapons, and then at the Baker-Aziz meeting in Geneva extracting a threat by the United States to destroy him if they were used, he lowered the risks of war enormously; he could be driven from Kuwait or even, as he chose, withdraw most of his forces anyway, knowing the United States and its allies would not pursue him.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, it is not clear why a threat to destroy Hussein if he used ABC weapons would automatically imply a reliable declaration that they would not do it if he refrained, as the same author acknowledges by quoting that "intuition would suggest" the US tried to kill Saddam Hussein with attacks on shelters. Nor does it explain why Bush decided not to crush those Iraqi troops that opposed the allied forces (see next subsection).

In power terms, the Iraqi power translation mistake would be explained through the constraints of domestic Iraqi legitimacy. One needs thus to reassess the initial power of Iraq, this time not in the military, but in the political sector. The story looks like a poker game, where the US move to violently react to a limited attack (Kuwait, not Saudi Arabia being the aim) raised the bid. The Iraqi government, forced to escalate as well, had to prepare for a diplomatic bargain backed by a military option that was not sustained by its political power. Trying to use its military might as leverage for financial and political security, the political insecurity boomeranged back on military power, both by disabling

<sup>42</sup> In a private conversation in January 1994, Ghassan Salamé said that this rationalisation has been used among Middle East/IR scholars. In a slightly different form, Fred Halliday asks himself "how far, in the end, Saddam really fought to defend Kuwait at all." See "The Gulf War 1990-1991...", p. 119.

<sup>43</sup> Fred Halliday, "The Gulf War 1990-1991...", p. 119.

diplomatic options and eventually by provoking a war and military defeat. By raising the stakes, the US changed the game.

Yet, all this can only be argued *ex post*. It does not derive from the systemic analysis, the origins of the crisis. *It cannot be derived from the power assessment at the beginning of the conflict*. Rational-choice approaches like Neorealism, that attach a central explanatory place to power must, therefore, disaggregate the conflict into a series of different games with intermediate outcomes feeding into a general result. By doing this micro job, one can also change the assessment at the macro-level, i.e. the power structure used to analyse the origins of the conflict. Since there is no possibility of measuring these items, Neorealist power analysis becomes, in its own terms, unfalsifiable.<sup>44</sup>

### *No way to Baghdad*

The US administration's decisions, namely to leave Hussein in power and even to stop the fight while a substantial part of the Republican Guard remained intact, prompted several criticisms. General Schwarzkopf is reported to have pushed for some days more in order to crush the military backbone of the Iraqi regime — without going to Baghdad. Prominent commentators, with the hindsight of later developments, later agreed with him rather than Bush.<sup>45</sup> For once, it was not the “one arm tied behind the back”, but a deliberate decision by President Bush to stop further combat. So, it was not a lack of will to translate potential into actual power. This means that there must have been a particular reason to stop fighting.

Besides the above mentioned Iraqi masterplan that trapped the US into a limited conflict, two rationalisations are generally offered. First, further military action would have stretched the UN cover too much: there was a risk that the international coalition, in particular the USSR and China, would leave the US alone and undercut the legitimacy of the whole enterprise. In power terms, that would mean that the actual power should not be assessed with sole reference to the military theater, despite the diplomatic success in being given *carte blanche* for military intervention. In the regime of foreign intervention, there are still some rules to be followed, in particular if one, as the US, claimed to install a

<sup>44</sup> This means that at this point security studies and Neorealist power analysis go apart. A security-focused approach will try to integrate the political vulnerability by showing at the micro-level, how it influenced the Iraqi government's security perception, thus its behaviour and the final outcome of the conflict. The explanatory thrust of rational choice can be kept, but security perception becomes decoupled from power relationally conceived. It is not relational power, i.e. the control of a relationally valued resource, that explains Iraqi compliance. Neither the US, nor anyone else in the Neorealist account possessed the most important resource for constraining the Iraqi government to submit, namely domestic political legitimacy. The account of legitimacy is part of a security analysis, but not part of the relational power analysis of the Gulf War, except insofar as the lacking domestic legitimacy could impinge the successful translation of existing power resources into actual power.

<sup>45</sup> “Les Etats du Golfe n'ont rien appris” (entretien avec M. François Heisbourg, [alors] directeur de l'Institut International d'Études Stratégiques), *Le Monde*, 17 janvier 1992, p. 3.

“new world order” based on multilateral rule. Thus, Bush’s decision is based on a wider calculus of the potential power of the US, which then appears more limited.<sup>46</sup>

Although this seems a reasonable motive not to march to Baghdad, it is less so for not crushing Republican Guards. Thus, Bush’s decision remains somewhat irrational, except if we come back to power balancing as the Realist imperative. In this more cynical reconstruction, Bush was aware of the possible power vacuum in Iraq and left Saddam Hussein in his job. This had Soviet backing because it avoided a stronger Shi’ite influence on its Southern borders. Probably, the Turks were content to see the Kurds not becoming completely independent, although one could also argue that a vacuum in Iraq might have prompted a Turkish attack. The whole scenario would be in perfect harmony with former US policies who could not do better than shift back and forth in their assistance between Iraq and Iran to avoid any preponderance. Yet, this decision, although most reasonable in power terms has been certainly the most difficult to sell to the public because it was mobilized on the World War II script. It was just not possible to leave Hitler in power. The genocide convention could have been used to protect the Kurds. Thus, the still persisting dissonance with this decision does not derive from the power account, but from the way it has been overlaid by the Second World War script.

But the decision might not have been easy for Bush, either, if just for a moment we leave the power-account. Above it was argued that Bush certainly mobilised the World War II script for and during Desert Shield and that it cannot be excluded that the feedback with the US defence culture reaffirmed an understanding of the crisis which became increasingly closer to this script. Now, it could well be that the massive air bombardement had convinced him before the ground attack that the analogy was visibly awkward. Another possible solution could lay in the fact that the Vietnam script finally overtook World War II. Crushing Saddam Hussein, the US would head for a more permanent occupation as in post-war Europe. This raised concerns about a possible “quagmire” scenario which the Vietnam script had “taught” at all means to avoid. As one official said

We decided early on if there was anything that could turn this into a Vietnam conflict it was going into densely populated areas and getting twelve soldiers a day killed by snipers. The main reason was that if we went to overthrow him, how would we get out? If we set up a puppet government, how would we disentangle?<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> This does not mean that despite the official Kuwaiti declarations to see Saddam Hussein removed, the Kuwaiti government was not at all encouraging it. Even one year after the conflict, with the civil war in Iraq ended, a weakened Iraqi regime stigmatised in the West, but holding power domestically has been seen by Kuwaiti officials as the best possible constellation for Kuwait. It would both guarantee the paying of reparations, and turn the domestic Kuwaiti discontent away to a common enemy. The worst possible scenario, but also the least likely, would have been a new pro-Western government which would have been integrated into the regional political system, be allowed to export oil (and thus take back some Kuwaiti market shares) and would have redirected the interest again toward the Gulf states, and in particular Kuwait. For such an analysis, as informed by debates within the Kuwaiti government, see Wolfgang Köhler, “Wenn Saddam Hussein stürzte”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 March 1992, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Drew, “Letter from Washington”, *The New Yorker* (7 May 1991), p. 97.

In conclusion, then, one of the rationalisations shows how Neorealist power analysis shifts back and forth between the micro and macro level. Unable to derive an explanation just from the structural level because power distribution does not presage the range of outcomes, it needs to move to the unit level, so as to show how power is translated into outcomes. Pushed to rationalise translation failures on the unit level, it can shift back to show that agents can anticipate balance-of-power equilibria and thus can show a self-interested restraint in using the available resources. We are far from a “logic of power” as a causal conceptualisation would have it. True, some Neorealists acknowledge that these are only ex-post explanations. These ex-post rationalisations command, however, a wider audience to the extent they structure the way the conflict will be read in the future, and the important lessons that will be drawn. An analysis of governance turns to the puzzle-solving activity of the academic, because it mobilises pre-existing interpretive schemes and because their successful application reproduces particular ways of interpreting the world and legitimates the “practitioners” who competently handle them.

## 2. The open construction of the opponent as ritualised legitimation

Is puzzle-solving, here exemplified by the particular power-analysis research programmes an implicit form of governance, practices can also openly invoke major dichotomies to “discipline” the way competent debates should be pursued. The deployment, often well-established and ritualised, of these dichotomies enframe the understanding and interpretation of events by offering the choice of two (and not more) options that are believed to exhaust the possibilities. They silence, however, the devices through which the dichotomy has to come to be believed as the objective word about the problem.

After some conceptual clarifications, one case will illustrate how this worked for the analysis of the Second Gulf War. A caveat should already be entered here. The illustration is taken from Tucker and Hendrickson’s book which is a lucid criticism of US’ action in the war. That they also use some of these dichotomies illustrates how particular analytical disposition “governs” our understanding, not to diminish the overall value of their work.

### 2.1. Realist “blackmails”

Poser, dans l’œuvre même, la distinction entre deux lectures, c’est se mettre en mesure d’obtenir du lecteur conforme que, devant les calembours les plus déconcertants ou les platitudes les plus criantes, il retourne contre lui-même les mises en garde magistrales, ne comprenant pas trop, mais soupçonnant l’authenticité de sa compréhension et s’interdisant de juger un auteur qui s’est une fois pour toutes instauré lui-même en juge de toute compréhension.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 199.

The starting point is the practice of the international community of statesmen (although not all of them) whose shared system of meaning, Realism, is based on what Ashley calls the “double move”: positing the ideal of a community as the one realised in the Western



world, but deferring its realisation beyond domestic community. This move constitutes the field of the statesman and defines their “diplomatic culture”. The competent subjects of international political community are those statesmen who share both a commitment to the Western rationalist tradition and its limitation to the national community. This defines a particular space at the margins between the domestic and the international, where the absence of government is called anarchy, but which de facto is not absent of rule. The competent statesmen defend the national community, embodying the highest stage of political development against foreign threats. They also must guard the precarious international rule from the anti-historical universalism present in domestic society’s rationalist commitments: Morgenthau’s nightmare of “universalist nationalism” which has forgotten the borders of its effectiveness.

At the same time, the double move silences the very existence of such a community misrecognizing it as a state of nature, even if the latter is redefined as in the English School.<sup>48</sup> In other words, by repeatedly returning to the external/internal distinction, it not only creates a space for the international politician, reproducing the margins of domestic and international societies, but hides from view that such a transnational space and community exists. The sphere of international politics is constituted and normalised, and the prevailing subjectivity of modern statemanship is empowered. These dispositions are taken as necessary responses to a “truth already given.”<sup>49</sup>

Together the two effects of the realist double move set up an irony of no small proportions. They constitute a community whose members will know their place only as an absence of community. More than that, they constitute a field of self-consciously “power political” practice that refuses to entertain the question of its own power. They constitute a field of power politics that cannot and will not speak of its own dependence upon the competing waging of an unending historical struggle to delimit the reach of rational order, pry open its own practical space, and secure recognition for its own distinctive mode of subjectivity.<sup>50</sup>

If we recall Bourdieu’s concepts, this would mean that the double move is part of the underlying doxa of a field which is constituted by statesman whose competence can be apprehended by their handling of its dispositions. On the basis of this doxa, the “visible”

<sup>48</sup> The position of the English school is ambiguous in this regard. On the one hand, individual writers are repeatedly castigating the “domestic analogy” (Bull) and/or the undisputable facts of anarchy which make international relations so repetitive and non theorisable (Wight). The British approach has, therefore, been criticised by US Realists who (rightly) pointed out that repetitiveness is the presupposition of a theory. See Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Intellectual and Political Functions of Theory,” in *Truth and Power. Essays of a Decade 1960-70* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), pp. 248-51. On the other hand, the concept and the study of “international society” with its “diplomatic culture” (Bull) points exactly to such an international community of diplomats, which, reformulated as a transnationally shared Western “discursive practice”, has attracted the interest by poststructuralist writers. See in particular James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy. A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>49</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space”, pp. 418-419.

<sup>50</sup> Richard K. Ashley, “The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space”, p. 420.

debate is between an orthodox and a heterodox view, which, at least within the functioning of a field do not question the doxa as such, and can therefore be seen as part of the positive reproduction of the field or practice. This is particularly the case, if the orthodox view not only defines common wisdom, or the most accepted theses, but also its “legitimate” contender.

This is not always done by the explicit imposition from the side of the orthodoxy. In the pre-established categories of the discipline, heterodoxy can constitute itself as a legitimate group only by accepting the doxic ordering of the field. “Au travail moteur de la critique hérétique répond le travail résistant de l’orthodoxie. Les dominés ont partie liée avec le discours et la conscience, voire la science, puisqu’il ne peuvent se constituer en groupe séparé, se mobiliser et mobiliser la force qu’ils détiennent à l’état potentiel qu’à condition de mettre en question les catégories de perception de l’ordre social qui, étant le produit de cet ordre, leur imposent la reconnaissance de cet ordre, donc la soumission.”<sup>51</sup> In response to heterodox criticisms, the orthodoxy will try to refer ritually to the doxa. The discourse will appear as the most “natural” and self-evident possible, most informed by common wisdom, thereby trying to reinstall the innocence of the doxic position.<sup>52</sup>

For post-structuralists, this is exactly what happened to Realism and its many contenders, most notably idealism. For them, the ritualised return to this dichotomy does not, in fact, open up debate to acknowledging plurality of opinions, but offers a double *and* exhaustive choice in which one side is inherently delegitimated. By setting the stage in this way, the Realist realist-idealist debate ritualises a biased choice.

From what he calls the “heroic practice”, Richard Ashley derives such a Realist “blackmail” either to honour the Realist account, or to project (by the same discourse constructed as) a utopian view of the world. He thereby means the circular definition of sovereignty and anarchy whereby the latter is a residual category and both are said to exhaust the possibilities of understanding rule. Once one accepts thinking in these terms, every real-world event that questions the strict division between the two will be disciplined by reference to the debate between the orthodoxy of Realism and the heterodoxy of idealism. The transposal of domestic reasoning abroad is both the end of international statesmanship (as an independent and qualitatively different realm), and the demise of the competent international analyst for the sin of “domestic analogy”.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.2. Heterodoxy and Orthodoxy in the analysis of the Second Gulf War

### *Justifying just war*

The just war issue has taken the biggest space in all discussions about the Second Gulf War. Criticisms for Saddam Hussein were considered normal. The discussion turned toward the allied forces. With regard to the *ius ad bellum*, the just cause, competent

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 154.

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p. 155.

<sup>53</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Richard K. Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State”, pp. 230-239.

authority, and right intention characteristics were discussed. The immediate response to the invasion of Kuwait, as a defence of its sovereignty, was brandished with a double standard when similar invasions were not answered by the states' community.<sup>54</sup> Some other commentators responded correctly that the *annexation* of a territory is a rather seldom event and has generally provoked more response. To which one can respond, that Iraq declared the annexation only after the hardening reaction of the US, and so on.

More discussion was provoked by the two requirements of *ius in bello*, discrimination and proportionality. Whereas the new "intelligent" weapons were able to discriminate better than in other wars, some 93 percent of the total consisted of unguided "dumb" weapons, three-quarters of which, according to one commentator, missed their targets.<sup>55</sup> With regard to proportionality, the critique was especially aimed at the decision to destroy Iraq's military and economic assets. Having attacked water and electricity plants, it endangered and indirectly cost civil lives. Thus, according to the May 1991 Harvard Study Team Report it was projected that some 170 000 children, a doubling of the prewar figures, under the age of five would die in the year following the end of the war, from the effects of the war. "Strategic targets" identified by US military planners had increased from 57 at the time of the invasion of Kuwait to eventually 700 when the US war aims moved to destroying Iraq as a *future* regional power. Moreover, "some targets, especially late in the war, were bombed primarily to create postwar leverage over Iraq, not to influence the course of the conflict itself. Planners now say their intent was to destroy or to damage valuable facilities that Baghdad could not repair without foreign assistance."<sup>56</sup> The reconstruction of the power plants alone will cost \$US 20 bn. Embargo and special oil-selling deals have made Iraq absolutely dependent on foreign money and entering the debt trap of both underdevelopment and foreign debt.<sup>57</sup> There was, moreover, the claim, that *napalm* has been used by the US and not by Iraq which also stocked it.<sup>58</sup> Finally, Tucker and Hendrickson raised the question, if there is a proportionality to be kept in the enemy's lives to be sacrificed for the lives to be saved on one's own side. They also argue that weighing the necessity to resort to war only as last resort when all other means have been tried in vain (and not for the requirements of a US policy which had to avoid quagmires), has to be measured against the expectation of war's destructiveness. For them, "in the gulf crisis, that obligation was not given the weight it deserved."<sup>59</sup>

The debate replayed the positions of the two major schools. The *internalist* position holds that *ius in bello* is subsumed under *ius ad bellum*. This has been the official policy-

<sup>54</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, "Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...", p. 268. See also David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> B. Gellman in *The Washington Post* (23 June 1991), cited in Abbas Alnawrawi, "Economic Consequences of the 1991 Gulf War", p. 347.

<sup>57</sup> Abbas Alnawrawi, "Economic Consequences of the 1991 Gulf War", pp. 347-50.

<sup>58</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe: nuages après la tempête", p. 457.

<sup>59</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 139, 141 (quote). For others, there had been enough time for diplomacy. See Fred Halliday, "The Gulf War 1990-1991...", p. 116.

line of the allied forces, as well. The *externalist* position claims that the two are independence standards. For some, unjustified behaviour during the war can upset a justified *ius ad bellum*. In any case, the means by which one proposes fighting a war must be included into the catalogue of criteria for *ius ad bellum*.<sup>60</sup>

This whole debate, and this does not diminish its importance, is therefore treated as ritualised here, because it produces within its own terms two positions that exhaust the possibilities. It never questions the fact that states decide about the morality of war, and so accepts the Grotian understanding of the *raison d'État*, and not a Kantian morality of individuals.<sup>61</sup> “Nowhere is this more evident than in just-war theory’s condition that in order to interpret an act as aggression and the resulting conflict as just, ‘right authority’ must be exercised by a duly constituted sovereign power. What this requires is that a state—the only political authority recognized by just-war theory— or a state-substitute (such as the United Nations) be the body that reaches the decision regarding the need to employ force. Therefore it is always the state(s) going to war that will determine whether or not the war is necessary and just.”<sup>62</sup>

#### *Idealist evocations without idealists*

I will concentrate on a particular laborious attempt to enframe Bush into a Wilsonian, although admittedly a “perverted” (my word) one, and thereby to mobilise the established idealist-realist dichotomy. Tucker and Hendrickson criticised the Bush administration’s handling of the conflict as a test of will to stand against aggression which was built upon an analogy to the causes and consequences of unlawful violence in domestic society.<sup>63</sup> For them, the Bush administration made a categorical mistake. On the international level, aggression might be just the response to power shifts and accumulations, or to particular histories, such as, for instance, decolonisation, and not necessarily an expression of deeply-entrenched bad character. Thus, the motive for insisting on “criminalising” a state, stemmed from the strength of the legalist outlook within the American diplomatic tradition.<sup>64</sup> There, “to reward aggression in any way is simply to encourage it. Not only must aggressors go unrewarded but they must be punished as well, else there would be little incentive to potential aggressors to refrain from following in their footsteps.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> For this distinction and an argument in favour for the latter, see Robert Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 176-181. For a discussion, see for instance Fred Halliday, “The Gulf War 1990-91...”, pp. 128-29.

<sup>61</sup> For this argument, see for instance David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 25 and *passim*; and Peter Gowan, “The Gulf War, Iraq and Western Liberalism”, p. 34. For the general debate, see Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982). For a less cosmopolitan reading of Kant, see Andrew Hurrell, “Kant and the Kantian paradigm in international relations”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (July 1990), pp. 183-205.

<sup>62</sup> David Campbell, *Politics without Principle*, p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 39.

<sup>64</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 48.

Bush is incorporated into the idealist-realist debate. Thus, his “new world order” is taken seriously enough to be compared with a system of collective security, too much inspired by legalistic thinking.

For both, the states of the world, great and small, were to be guaranteed the same right of respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity [Panama?]. For both, the peace of the world was to be maintained and democratic societies [Kuwait?] to be made safe against the threat of arbitrary power by a universal system of collective security [UNSC?] which would create a community of power in place of the age-old balance of power... And, of course, for both, the United States was destined to play the role of leadership in the new world order, a role that fell to the nation primarily because it alone had “sufficient moral force” (Wilson) or “moral standing” (Bush) to lead the other nations of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, the authors also immediately find many differences between Wilson and Bush. But this is not the point. Despite the Panama invasion and the rather crude use of coercion and pressure during the whole conflict (also with the allies), which both writers duly criticise, they could even think about constructing such a story. They mobilise a dichotomy in US foreign policy with, what they call, the Wilson-Jefferson tradition of universal goals and peaceful means and the Hamilton-Lodge tradition with limited goals but a reliance on the balance of power and possible warfare. Seen from today, but I think also for the observers shortly after the war, Bush, if anything, is closer to the second tradition which he had to translate into the context of the end of the 20th century where foreign intervention on this massive scale is not self-legitimizing, but has to be backed by multilateral institutions. At no point, it seems, had Bush been really interested in a system of collective security. As the two authors note, Bush said at some point that the US would go to war independently if the UN would back it (it is a question if it could).

The Realist-idealist dichotomy is an argumentative device in Realist theory. Let us now see how it “captured” the analyst’s interpretation of Bush’s policies. What both oppose is the Bush strategy of leaving no room for negotiation, and the irremediable need to oppose aggression completely. Stating that the administration was influenced by the analogy to the treatment in the legal tradition of domestic society, they write

It did so by relying on a particular view of the proper and effective means for the prevention of aggressive behavior, one that stressed a reliance upon punishment rather than rehabilitation. According to this view, even if it were acknowledged that there might be deep-seated causes for aggressive behavior, attempts to respond to those causes would only serve to exacerbate the problem. History showed the importance of stopping aggressors at the outset, for the pathology of aggression is such that it never expires of its own accord.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>67</sup> Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, p. 39.

This argument is only at first sight self-evident. First, it is not clear why the liberal legal domestic tradition is based on punishment. Indeed, if the Bush administration had been relying on a legal, and not a penal, script, long debates exactly about the deep-seated causes of aggression would have ensued. Then, the passage derives its strength from the “historical lesson” that aggression had to be stopped at the outset. Yet, first offenses are generally exempted from criminalisation in the domestic legal system. This is instead an international lesson, provided exactly by the anti-appeasement consensus on which Realism is built. Preventive war, far from being an exception, is admitted in Realist theory, if not encouraged, under certain circumstances, as an especially far-seeing form of a limited conflict today to avoid a great war tomorrow. By blurring the legal with the penal tradition, and the international lessons of history with alleged psychological laws derived from domestic experiences, the Bush administration becomes in this reading the ultimate perversion of idealism: it mixes universalism with unlimited means to achieve it.

But, so the criticism goes, Bush pursued a politics based on principles: do not allow aggression to have any payoffs whereas it should be based on the calculated arranging of powers. In my view, if anything, he was showing the impossibility of the Realist ideal as a guide for public support. Tucker and Hendrickson do not tire of showing (and criticising) that if the lessons from Vietnam are that the US only engages in war if it can be quickly won with few casualties, then the US will be at pains to defend its national interest whenever these conditions are not fulfilled. It should be able to organise and mobilise whenever its interests are at stake: the higher the interests, the higher the cost that should be paid for it. In the Gulf, the stakes were not high enough for war, but could have been dealt with what they call “punitive containment”. In that sense they themselves maintain the penal and punitive metaphor. But, and more importantly, the US, and I do not know any country which has been able to mobilise its population to go to war, just on the cold calculus of a national interest defined in terms of a necessary equilibrium in power shifts, in particular if they are several thousand miles away on a border between countries that were hardly known by the larger public. Oil did not provoke much rallying behind Bush. Even if Bush had been just weighing power shifts, he would have needed principles to justify war. Only in the self-legitimising cases of self-defence are they taken-for-granted. Any Realist war will be justified by principles. And if the principles of history to which Bush referred, anti-appeasement, were wrong, they were the ones Realism enshrined after World War II.

It seems that they got trapped into thinking in the dichotomies Realist theory uses to organise thought and debate.

domestic logic	international logic
legal (principles)	political (power)
peaceful means	including war
collective security	balance of power

With only slight overstatement, the story goes as follows. Bush made a policy which was built upon principles, thus he was an idealist. He tried to humiliate Saddam Hussein, thus he was not using the rules of the (international Realist) diplomatic culture, hence he must be using domestic principles. Domestic principles are derived from a legal tradition which believes in an ultimate harmony of interests. This legal tradition will use arguments about collective security to legitimate itself internationally.

Of course, Bush does not fit into the scheme. As we have seen he made a distinction between domestic and international affairs. He was relying on the UNSC which is not an instrument of collective security. He diplomatically (i.e. politically) cajoled the UN into punishing Iraq. He did not follow the legal tradition of the independent arbiter, but the penal tradition of the world policeman.

Following Tucker's and Hendrickson's own account, if Bush was wrong, it was not because he was idealist, but because his power was not matched by foreign power or his own far-seeing moderation. It was not a new world order based on a system of collective security, but a "unipolar moment" that gave continuity to US post-Wall foreign policy.

Thus, Bush is a typical representative of the US conservative foreign policy tradition. All US foreign policy has been idealist, either isolationist (keeping our ideal intact at home) or interventionist (bringing our ideal abroad). In a sense, there are two interventionist idealist traditions: the "conservative" one which confounds foreign policy with zealous mission, and the "liberal" one, which takes it for (psychological) education. In both versions, foreign countries can be subsumed under the US model: the first by rolling back the "other", the second by persuasion. Whereas the second is indeed modelled to a certain extent on domestic conflict resolution, the first model is not. On the contrary, presupposing difference abroad is not conceived as giving sway to a right to be recognised as "equal", but is a problem to be overcome, because national security has become internationally defined. This is a power political conception which clearly distinguishes domestic and international politics but which is neither prudent nor moderate. What Tucker and Hendrickson are opposing is not idealism as such, but the lacking prudence which is part not of Realist *theory* but of Realist *diplomatic culture*.

The difficulty for Realism is that moderation is not easily derived from its precepts. It could never be taken for granted, despite the Realists' attempt to inculcate them onto foreign policy makers. By insisting on the end of isolationism and the necessarily international definition of US security in the 20th century, Realism got inscribed into a national policy which Morgenthau himself exhorts as "nationalistic universalism" and criticised in Vietnam. But a Realist should expect that there is no way to moderate foreign policy, except by power. Hence, in the Gulf, the US behaved just as a Realist would have it: as a barely challenged hegemon. *The basic problem for US Realists is that they want to show that the most rational national interest is served by prudent politics but, in fact, the very precepts of Realism make the "Imperial Temptation" a rational choice.* Writing about the increasingly unlimited intervention in Vietnam, Morgenthau ended his book with such a long-term argument

‘Among precautions against ambitions,’ Edmund Burke warned his countrymen in 1793 under similar conditions, ‘it may not be amiss to take one precaution against our *own*. I must fairly say, I dread our *own* power and our *own* ambition; I dread our being too much dreaded... We may say that we shall not abuse this astonishing and hitherto unheard-of power. But every other nation will think we shall abuse it. It is impossible but that, sooner or later, this state of things must produce a combination against us which may end in our ruin.’ Pitt and Castlereagh heeded that warning. Our future and the future of the world will depend on our heeding it as well.<sup>68</sup>

At first sight, therefore, the rationale for moderation is that the lack of it will provoke the balancing-of-power effect of other states which will combine against the hegemon. Yet, the US insisted in doing it with other countries to share responsibility and to acquire legitimacy, and not to let it appear as an *own* ambition. Furthermore, the quote, in fact, seems to say that regardless of the real ambitions, other countries will always *presume* a state to profit from its power. Indeed, this is what the Realist security dilemma tells. Why should a country then refrain from using it, in particular if it can thereby preempt the accumulation of power detrimental to its interests? What should it be “heeding” exactly?

That besides many particularly lucid analyses of the Gulf War, Tucker and Hendrickson construct Bush as a perverted Wilsonian idealist is therefore an indicator for the way Realist theory and analysis produces the dichotomies in which not the event has to be accounted, but the foreign policy practice has to be reproduced. Being closer to Realism and opposed to Bush’s war, the administration’s policy was understood as idealist with all the ritualised references, be they consonant or not.

Realism is caught in the dilemma that its argument against domestic analogies pushes for the definition of an international realm which is qualitatively different from domestic politics and where the balance of power cannot be avoided. Such a definition undermines the very possibility of purposeful action. It risks defining foreign policy away. This means that the Realist diplomat and academic, in pursuing his aim to define and legitimate a particular space outside domestic politics undermines its very role as an actor. The solution is found by leaving some choice in the given range of necessity. This realm of choice is, however, only *created* if other statesmen share it. Hence, the diplomatic culture indicates both possibility and limit of foreign policy and the Realist statesmen is both the only expert and the legitimate pursuer of foreign policy. In other words, Realism is in a permanent dilemma between an ideal foreign policy practice which claims to be derived from the inpalpable fact of anarchy framing the rationally-derived “National Interest”, but which, in fact, is the practice of statesman sharing the diplomatic culture of international society. Hence, its discourse has to return incessantly to the structuring devices of its self-defined dichotomies to conceal its existence as a practice and thus to reproduce its legitimacy.

<sup>68</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965), p. 91.



### 3. Conclusion: Constructing the “lessons of...” debate: Kuwait against Berlin

While collective memory is important in the production of dispositions, interests and preferences, the interpretative action of agents influence the reproduction of collective memory. Relational power approaches can approach intentionally targetted institutional changes, which, widely conceived, can include attempts to influence collective memory.

An analysis of governance looks at non-intentional, pre-established, and more importantly, authoritative interpretations as feedback into the reproduction of fields and their habitus. Expert observers (not necessarily, but including academics) contribute to the meaning-giving of the conflict. The two analysed practices, ex post power rationalisations and dichotomically-biased Realist interpretation, *can* have the following effects.

It is impressive the extent to which power plays a central role in the explanation/understanding of international events, although its place is certainly aggrandised by the focus of this study. The established way of analysing the event took up the perspective, although not necessarily the point of view, of the US administration. Policy-relevant studies are studies that can feedback into foreign policies, not generally international politics. The concern to overwrite the Vietnam disaster, circularly reinforced by the participants across fields, gave the entire story a coherent outlook. This is undoubtedly augmented by my own construction. But I rather carefully followed the knowledge production about the war and its effects, and a US perspective, often combined with a US foreign policy perspective have been preponderant. This seems sociologically “obvious”, because both information and academic production is mainly a US business (which is not necessarily the US fault, at least with regard to Europe). But it is also “self-evident”, because the US is the only remaining super-power, thus we have to know what it is doing. We look at the US, simply because it matters most; but for whom? for what?

Taking power seriously supplements the Neorealist research agenda not only because it points to power phenomena neglected by Neorealist power analysis but also because it shows Neorealist power analysis, as any form of power analysis in a power-centered practice as IR, to be itself effecting power as such, both in the construction and the overcrowding of agendas and thus the interpretation of events. That the immediate appeal of power arguments in our discipline empower those using it, applies, of course, also to those who use different concepts of power to criticise Neorealism. Indeed, concepts of structural power could take part in the debate because their articulation in terms of power made them “authoritative”. And this very attempt to present a dyadic power analysis does the same: it tries to use a central concept, which because it is part of the conceptual basis of the discipline, can expect to prompt reactions. Framing an argument in terms of power mobilises dispositions in the discipline that give authority to the argument. Using “power” in IR is not innocent.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Yet, this does not mean that “power” is something inherently negative. It allows focused discussion, shared analysis, common understanding. It is productive.

Comparable to the return to more glorious scripts of US foreign policy when the end of the Cold War threatened its self-understanding and identity, the “ritualised” responses that the academic field of IR mobilised, also sanitized the impact on theory. The critique of the “new world order”, Realist or radical, showed that there was nothing new under the sun, and that therefore everything could be reduced to the usual idealist utopianism. Wittingly or not, the ideological critique of the “founding myth” in the Gulf could have undermined the more explosive implications of Gorbachev’s New Thinking and the fall of the Wall. If we read the Gulf War, and not Berlin, as the defining moment of the post-Wall order, its character of change is close to null.

In this analysis of governance, the Gulf War is not the defining, but the closing moment of the post-Wall era. This not because the UN system of collective security will never work again as it did during the Gulf War but because its interpretation has stabilised challenged dispositions in the fields of the international society of statesmen and the academic community of IR.<sup>70</sup> Those commentators aware of the inertial Cold War behaviour raised the question. “The sudden end of the cold war overturned the political truths of the postwar world—truths by which the experts had interpreted and understood this world. It raised the issue that there might be still deeper forces at work in the relations of nations, forces that might invalidate the political truths believed to govern the postwar world. At the very least, the events of 1989 pointed to the need for looking anew at the world, a task for which the expert, even if willing to do so, might not be the best party.”<sup>71</sup> Yet, in that passage, they are actually not referring to thinking anew but to unburying the “deeper forces at work in the relations of nations”, i.e. to unravel Realist truths about a power (and not an ideological) contest, already known.

This crucial moment could be interpreted differently, because it could mean that the Cold War was no “necessity” inscribed in bipolar power. By crushing the self-referential reproduction of enemy images, Soviet New Thinking showed that a system of self-help is no necessity, National Interests, indeed power politics as such socially constructed. “The absence or failure of roles makes defining situations and interests more difficult, and identity confusion may result. This seems to be happening today in the United States and the former Soviet Union; without the cold war’s mutual attributions of threat and hostility to define their identities, these states seem unsure of what their ‘interests’ should be.”<sup>72</sup> If power politics is a social construction, the Second Gulf War’s symbolic return to World War II, Korea, Vietnam or more ancient origins disciplines the understanding, and thus the effects, of Berlin 1989 in conformity with established parameters. A dyadic power analysis questions the borders and identity of international politics both for statesmen and experts alike. Power analysis becomes a critique of power politics.

<sup>70</sup> Viewed like this, Fred Halliday’s “The Gulf War 1990-1991...” becomes rather curious. With all the ritualised references to the first chair in IR (the article is based on a E.H. Carr lecture), it appears as a self-defence of the discipline that she is still useful and necessary for the world.

<sup>71</sup> Robert W. Tucker & David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation*, pp. 22-23.

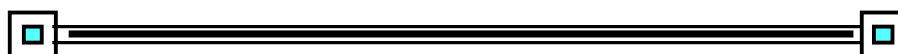
<sup>72</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics”, p. 399.

# **Part VI**

## **Conclusion**

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## Power Analysis: From a guide to a critique of Power Politics



Part II set out the academic context within which the present power debate in IR developed. It argued that its origins lay in the 1970s, when Realism lost its dominant paradigmatic position and contending approaches questioned the very definition of the discipline's core. The double impact of states' potentially widening authority under the regime of embedded liberalism, and of their declining effective control in a period of rapid transnationalisation is the background for the renewed discussion on concepts of power which attempt to capture this more diffused character. In times of paradigmatic crisis, "power" seemed to be a particularly well-suited point of departure, both because it was a central concept in Realism, and because reconceptualisations of power call upon redefinitions of what counts as a political issue. In one stroke, power arguments could attack the discipline from within and redefine its non-academic scope. Part III argued that, indeed, "structural power" and related concepts succeeded in widening the questions, scope, and research variables compared with the Neorealist understanding and research programme on power. These concepts did not, however, resolve the meta-theoretical tensions between individualist and intersubjective approaches. Therefore, I proposed that an analysis of power should be based on a pair of concepts, which are both necessary and mutually irreducible. Part IV and V showed how they could be empirically applied within particular theoretical research programmes, without implying that these were the only possible ways.

This last chapter suggests on which grounds the two stories around power and governance can be more precisely integrated within an IR/IPE research programme. Coming back to Part II, this power analysis hopes to enrich the meeting point for several IR/IPE approaches, including some Classical Realists, on interpretivist grounds. It is done under the sign of a double turn. In a way, it uses the epistemological turn of the 1980s, to argue for a sociological turn of IR/IPE theory in the 1990s. The sometimes culturalist reference

lies in the attempt to reconstruct the intersubjective context for the emergence of dispositions. This can be studied at the level of states, as the discourse-analytical application to foreign policy analysis shows. But it could also be part of Mainstream IR/IPE, if one emphasises the culturalist components found, for instance, in Keohane's framework.<sup>1</sup> This would recover the intersubjective part of regime analysis, that has been always present in the theory's assumptions, although not in its application.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, this conclusion will take up the claim advanced in the conceptual chapter that analyses of power imply the redefinition of the art of the possible. Part V suggested that the feasible and thinkable limits derived from Neorealism could have diminished 1989's potential for change in practices of statesmen and academics alike. "*Realpolitik*" appears "without politics" (Kratochwil) in its constant attempt to adapt to a reality already given. Or, in other words, since Neorealism contributes to defining this very reality, a redefined power-analysis implies a critique of Power-Politics.

## 1. Combining power and governance

To propose a power analysis structured around individual power and impersonal governance should limit the risk of unnecessary reductionism. But it could also run the risk of replacing it with a form of unreflected eclecticism. Since one of the main purposes of the present study is to show how the concept of power has shifted from a defence to a critique of (Neo)Realism, the exposition followed a scheme of "Neorealism and Its Critics". The two empirical parts were organised in such a way as to show what a Neorealist power analysis would miss. This is a slightly different undertaking than the proposed power analysis which, from the outset, would include the two poles. The remaining task is to sketch on which grounds this could be done, both methodologically and with regard to the empirical case.

### 1.1. An interpretivist power analysis

A methodological framework that is wide enough to combine power and governance can neither rely on a methodological individualist, nor on a positivist approach. Since a combined analysis of power and governance should share common methodological assumptions, this implies that the common denominator must be found on hermeneutic grounds.<sup>3</sup> Yet a conceptual analysis does not, as such, propose a new *theory* to explain international relations. The empirical case relied on existing approaches for the selection of relevant focuses, variables, and concepts, as for instance the impersonal processes of

<sup>1</sup> Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, "International organization: a state of the art on an art of the state...".

<sup>3</sup> Structuralist accounts which would reduce agency to function-fulfillment are excluded for the opposite reductionism. But since no social theory of my knowledge presents such a crude version of structuralism today, this seems more a remark for the sake of completeness, than for an actual debate.

legitimation in Part V. Hence, the combination of power and governance that I can outline here must leave open which exact explanatory theory should be used. A conceptual analysis can check the coherence of the conceptual and meta-theoretical assumptions of such theories. It does not provide one.

*Combining intentionalist and intersubjective approaches*

There has been a tendency in the Neorealist-Neoinstitutionalist debate has been to supplement a pure rational choice approach with variables that focus on preference formation and the systematic biasing of opportunity sets. This is often discussed by rational choice scholars themselves. Here, some form of governance, redefined as some system of norms, would become a supplement for all those cases where a rational choice approach can fail. This solution was found wanting by the same scholars. On the one hand, it contradicts the usual assumption of constant preferences. Although all rational choice scholars are, of course, aware that preferences can change over time, many resist the variance of preferences mainly on the ground that it would make falsifiable hypotheses impossible: every test failure could be *ad hoc* explained by a shift in preferences.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, norms can be used as an easy residual category of the research programme. Since there is no “robust” theory which accounts for when norms override rationality, or, indeed, how exactly preferences are formed, even those who accept that norms can exercise an independent causal power in human behaviour see no way to include both norms and rational choice in one approach. It would offer “little more than ‘thick description’.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, rational choice, despite its known limits, is said to be the only scientific theory in town.

The present study sought to proceed from the opposite way. It tried to make the argument that rational choices of the main actors, both parametric and strategic, are insufficient for the understanding of such a complex event as an international war. The empirical case also showed that an analysis of governance could come to results that undermine or severely limit the explanatory value of rational choice approaches. This implies that one cannot take the results from rational choice for granted and then adapt other approaches accordingly. “Add governance and stir” won’t do. Both power and governance should *a priori* be given equal weight in the interpretation of the case.

Translated onto different steps of the theory, this means that before we get to the stage of intentional interaction, the three macro-micro links, as outlined in chapter 11, have to be checked, namely the construction of the very identity of agency, the systematic furthering of capacities, and the social construction of thinkable action. If, from the level of practices, governance is the capacity of practices to create and mobilise dispositions,

<sup>4</sup> Gary Becker (1976) “The Economic Approach to Human Behavior”, in Jon Elster (ed.), *Rational Choice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 116-17.

<sup>5</sup> Jon Elster, “Introduction”, in Jon Elster (ed.), *Rational Choice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 22-26 (26).

from the agent level it is best understood as the dis/empowerment to which their actions contribute, whether wittingly or not. The reproduction of practices cannot be adequately understood without reference to the participants' competent understandings and skillful deployments of their dispositions. An empirical analysis should furthermore be aware of the assumed interaction between the particular event and the reproduction of practices.

Both poles of the analysis can be complementary. For instance, Neorealist power analysis analysed Iraqi aggression as a last resort for overcoming its financial crisis, which, in turn, posed a legitimacy problem. The analysis of governance added another power dimension in order to understand a more general and systematic legitimacy problem of Arab societies. Similarly, the rationalist interaction analysis of the bargaining behaviour could be better understood with reference to the increasing hold of the Hitler-World War II script on US perception, and a possible preference shift toward a "war at all cost" option. Yet it can also add indeterminacy, as most visibly seen in the shift of the very research questions. The object of analysis is not only human (or states') behaviour but, at least for power-centered approaches, the dispositions of agents and practices.

Are we therefore compelled to choose between an explanatory theory which is insufficient, but which at least is operationalisable in a positivist way, as Elster does, or a repertoire of variables which includes "everything but the kitchen sink"? I think "power" and "governance" have attracted so much theoretical and conceptual interest because these phenomena seem to be linked to central causal (and normative) factors in an analysis. Thus, Parts IV and V can also be read as examples of what kind of variables have to be included. The list might be long, their exact explanatory weight cannot be stated in advance. Yet it is neither arbitrary, nor without wider heuristic value. The theories that have been used to illustrate the here-proposed power analysis are open to, and have been often subjected, to criticism. Indeed, the analysis of governance systematically requires what good scientific work anyway does: to make clear the underlying assumptions of an interpretation and to show awareness of how these interact with the results of the study. This intellectual rigour and transparency is what interpretive science can provide to allow reasoned discussion about both theories and empirical findings.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Ideal-types and thick description*

Thus, is this scientific work then rightly described as "thick description"? The term needs some clarification. The present study can only provide a set of non-randomly chosen focuses for the understanding of empirical cases. They build up on the conceptual and empirical literature we have at hand. The result are conceptual complexes, not explanatory models. They are compatible with analytical approaches based on ideal types that help to understand and to reconstruct particular events. They are "frameworks of analysis" for

<sup>6</sup> This could also be accepted by more positivistic inclined scholars. See Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Toward a Scientific Understanding of International Conflict", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 29 (1985), pp. 121-136.



apprehending empirical data. The term “description” should therefore not be understood as an unreflective picturing of reality: ideal types are highly selective devices. We are far from an *histoire événementielle*, because the epistemological basis is close to Giddens’ double hermeneutics or Geertz’ second order story, not to an empiricist history or an “emphatic” culturology.<sup>7</sup>

Let me exemplify this kind of approach with Allison’s models whose methodology has been a constant reference in the present study. Weberian Realists have read Allison’s models as (sociological) ideal types for the understanding of the Cuban crisis.<sup>8</sup> These ideal types were derived through an inductive-deductive strategy in which theoretical and conceptual analysis was used to explain empirical puzzles. On the same grounds, the empirical case is put into more generalisable terms. This is because all political analysis is per definition comparative. Its assumptions link up with concepts, frameworks, and empirical cases from other studies and can, at the same time, contribute to this pool of knowledge. These translations from one case to the other are not easy, and need to be carefully and self-reflectively specified. But this is what distinguishes the political scientist or sociologist from the (pure) historian (if such a distinction is needed). Only by applying the positivist’s ideal of science could it be denied that this an enterprise which adds to our knowledge.

Although Allison relied heavily on theoretical literature, his models were probably never meant to be a contribution to general models of behaviour, or a rebuttal of rational choice theory, as some recent critiques read him.<sup>9</sup> Allison is explicit in his final chapter that these are just heuristic models, that need to be reshaped, supplemented, or discarded. They were necessary to make sense to his empirical questions, namely why missiles were stationed in Cuba, why the US decided on a quarantine, and why the missiles were withdrawn. They just delimit and order variables to be taken into account for understanding the puzzles of the Cuba crisis. They do not provide theories that bureaucracies will always behave as in this particular case. Allison works the other way round; how can one build a framework to understand why the particular bureaucracy behaved the way it did. To what extent these models are usable in other circumstances, must be judged case by case. What the models make very clear, however, is which variables have been proven important in one particular context and to what extent interpretations are constructed upon such frameworks.

Since I came to an empirical illustration from a conceptual analysis, the empirical chapters started from the other end. They were not led by empirical puzzles, but by the attempt to show how the findings of a conceptual analysis could be used for asking different questions and focusing on other variables during the interpretation of empirical

<sup>7</sup> For the classical statement of Clifford Geertz’ approach, see his (1973) “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), pp. 3-30.

<sup>8</sup> As an example, see Raymond Aron, *Les dernières années du siècle*, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond, “Rethinking Allison’s Models”, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 2 (June 1992), pp. 301-322.

data. Power looks at the transformative capacities of agents, and governance centers on the creation and mobilisation of dispositions. These concepts were embedded into metatheoretically compatible explanatory theories, chosen from those present in the IR/IPE debate, in which they appear as key concepts.

Although the exact choice of theories is left open, it seems that the choice for an interpretivist and intersubjective approach puts particular requirements on the analyst. It requires meta-theoretical and methodological awareness, as well as the specialised knowledge of different area specialists. This includes the North-Western diplomatic culture, which is the intellectual baggage of the IR/IPE scholar, and which is far from obvious for outsiders.<sup>10</sup> It furthermore asks for some distance from this culture, because it is always part of the very object of study (see in particular chapter 14). Then, area studies specialists will be often needed, as chapter 12's insufficiencies document only too well. Since this is rather demanding on the individual researcher, there might be not much more to do than to follow Allison's research design. He suggested that when little information is at hand, foreign policy analysis is condemned to use the rational actor model. Since the assumptions can meet the situation, this would at least provide some understanding of the case. But if research is followed on a more ambitious scheme, then more models, or if the analysis is centered around power, the more demanding analysis of governance should be included. At any stage, and this is the stronger claim in the present and in Allison's work, researchers should be aware of the existence of these other levels so as to reduce the risk that the rational actor explanation will be taken for more than it is: a powerful shorthand waiting for ulterior research which can be expected to lead to internal inconsistencies in the explanation.

## 1.2. Power and governance in the Second Gulf War

After this introduction, it should be already a bit clearer how Part IV/V would have been combined. The micro-macro link has been already spelled out, as well as the existence of a parallel research focus on both action and dispositions. The analysis would be based on an interpretivist (comparative) sociology as research methodology. In the following, I will concentrate on the way the "power" angle, presented here in a Neorealist vein, should be rewritten to be consistent with these requirements.

In a sense, the biggest cut would be at the start. There can be no "logic of power". As already argued by Aron and Wolfers, among others, there is nothing deterministic in the distribution of power. Since international anarchy does not necessarily imply the state of nature, as Bull had cogently argued<sup>11</sup>, there is no necessary drive to accumulate

<sup>10</sup> Just think about the astonished eyes of newcomers to IR when they are first confronted with the self-referential logic of nuclear over-kills and diplomatic manoeuvres.

<sup>11</sup> For the best succinct statement, see still Hedley Bull, "Society and Anarchy in International Relations", in H. Butterfield & M. Wight (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge *et al.*: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 35-50.

power. Power is neither a necessary means nor the necessary immediate aim of international politics. Of course, the distribution of resources and of capacities is one of the factors in the functioning of the international society. Individual decisions by actors will take them into account. Yet to what extent this will be the case and how they affect behaviour depends on a series of other factors.

It is therefore preferable to start with an analysis centered around security, rather than power. As already mentioned, however, security, especially if defined as encompassingly as by Buzan, cannot be understood by the sole reference to material factors, or by a relational analysis. It is not independent of national discourse traditions and the interlocking of international practices. To understand them, the analysis of governance must elaborate the IR/IPE study of political security/legitimacy with approaches from political economy, historical sociology and discourse analysis. In this particular case, the two sides have been found compatible, if not complementary, because Buzan himself left the origins of (systematic) political legitimacy problems outside his analysis.<sup>12</sup>

The dynamic part is the one closest to rational choice. But even here, as chapter 13 has indicated, in light of the way collective memory can shape both the perception and the very shifting of preferences during the unfolding of the conflict, rational choice can only be applied *ex post*. This applies all the more if Aron's critique is accepted and rational choice is not possible because of the incommensurability of foreign policy aims.

The feedback analysis is especially useful to the extent it shows that agents and discourses perceive or include new security fields and factors. It is less convincing for the geopolitical account of gross power distribution which is nothing more than a factor whose importance must be assessed through the working of the international practice of statesman. More importantly, however, an integrated power analysis would need to switch to the level of intersubjective practices, such as Realist analysis or US foreign policy, so as to investigate their reproduction. The problem of combining the two levels will be most visible at this point, because we are less interested in the question of why agents choose to effect their capacities in a particular way, than in how where practices and their inscribed dispositions could have been affected during the event. The actual impact can only be understood by future research.

This has been a problem in the structuring of the empirical chapters, in particular chapter 14's discussion of miscalculations, whose information could have been both in the account of power and governance. Indeed, a first version was initially written as a section in the Neorealist power account, because it showed the typical puzzles such an explanation would look at. If the constructed matter of the entire power analysis is set out from the start, it might well be located again closer to the interpretation of the dynamic of the conflict. This presupposes, however, that the interest be clearly stated, namely the multiple focus not only on agent's decisions, but also

<sup>12</sup> See the beginning quote in chapter 12, 1.1.

- (1) on the way such a focus can be expected to construct a coherence for preference and choices which is undermined by the governance analysis, both in the construction of options and the mobilisation of collective memory; and
- (2) on the power effect an analysis privileging the agent level can itself have on the “lessons” derived from the interpretation of the event.

The analysis will eventually come back both to practices and to the identity of agents. Often, nothing might have changed, which allows us to centre power analysis more on individual power than impersonal governance. In our particular case, however, the analysis of governance came to the conclusion that possible effects of the end of the Cold War have been disciplined through our pre-established categories of thought and policy dispositions that were mobilised during the Second Gulf War. No change happened, so the hypothesis goes, not because practices and the identity of agents remained untouched, but because their changes have been counterbalanced through the way the Second Gulf War was conducted and understood.<sup>13</sup> The analysis pointed hence to the interaction of practices and events which must be in the mind of the analyst during the entire case study. Hence, the relation of power and governance is sometimes as in Einstein’s reformulation of Newton’s theory. The former can take account of both, although the latter is sufficient to explain many events. Unlike Einstein’s parsimonious account, however, social scientists must complicate their framework of analysis, lessen their explanatory power, and self-reflect on their double hermeneutical position. They cannot know in advance under which circumstances, a focus on individual power would be satisfactory.

## 2. The purposes of power analysis revisited: attributing moral blame and defining political options

The present study cannot be understood without the *rapprochement* that has taken place in some corners of IR/IPE theory and which were spelled out in chapter 2. Indeed, it wants to contribute to this *rapprochement* showing how a conceptual analysis can be made fruitful on their grounds. One of the *rapprochements* has, however, been largely absent from the study: the normative debate. Not that the previous chapters have no normative implications or were not done from a particular normative view. They certainly are. But these were not spelled out. The following cannot remedy this, but tries at least to concentrate on the moral purposes of “power” as introduced in chapter 3.

### 2.1. Power analysis and the attribution of responsibility and blame

Chapter 3 referred to the contexts within which power concepts are typically used. The previous study has concentrated on the practical and explanatory purposes. Here I will

<sup>13</sup> In a period of assumed change as the end of the (Second) Cold War, the Second Gulf War was maybe particularly suited as a case to show the inertial mobilisation and disciplining of foreign policy dispositions on the part of the statesman and the analyst alike.

touch the moral purpose. Power is often used to attribute moral blame or at least moral responsibility to an agent. As already noted in Part II, concepts of governance can only exceptionally be used for such a purpose, as some chosen examples drawn from the Second Gulf War indicate.

*Blaming nonintentional power*

Does the attribution of (structural) power imply a responsabilisation of the agent whose actions are at the origins of unintended effects? The attribution of non-intentional power points to an agent who has the capacities to effect particular actions which are then known to have important effects. It posits a potential link. As such it foremost serves the practical purpose. But in some situations it might also imply moral blame.

Let us take the example of the rather extensive US definition of strategic targets. The destruction of, for instance, water pumps and power stations could have been meant in the old doctrine of strategic bombardment, seeking to demoralise the enemy's population by contraining heavily their daily life also behind the front. Although strategic bombardment has been repeatedly used during this century, it is not considered fulfilling its aim.<sup>14</sup> Hence, one could make the argument that this implied unnecessary killing for the war aim. To the extent thoughts of strategic bombardment played a role in the decision of targets, moral blame would be justified.

Officially at least, the strategy was, however, exactly aimed at avoiding unnecessary destruction and casualties. The argument becomes slightly more intricate if we include, as Buzan rightly does, environmental factors into the security analysis. The security analysis still treated water and similar issues as traditional material resources. Morally speaking, the case is less obvious. When on 23 January 1991, General Colin Powell declared that bombing raids had destroyed two Iraqi nuclear reactors, he did not mention the risk of radioactive spillage.<sup>15</sup> The raids of the air force were targetting the whole petrochemical industry - and thus setting it on fire. The effects of large-scale fires were hardly taken into account. Yet, if the complete picture comes close to the following description, then unintended effects justifiably responsabilise the actors:

a war that simply went for everything that could nourish life; that caused identical damage to the power plants, so that... to provide limited power for hospitals, air conditioning, refrigeration was impossible; that took out irrigation pipes for farming, and communications for reporting disease; in sum it was a war which destroyed people's environments and the potential for economic activity which in turn puts massive pressure on the government. As in Africa, so in Iraq. The ecological cycle of food shortage is repeated endlessly across the world. A way of life is attacked; people flee and become

<sup>14</sup> For such a critique of the doctrine of strategic bombardment, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 3-21.

<sup>15</sup> John Vidal, "Poisoned Sand and Seas", in Victoria Brittain (ed.), *The Gulf Between Us: The Gulf War and Beyond* (London: Virago Press, 1991), p. 136.

dependent on others; by the time they can return the land has suffered; the relationship between people and their environment is ruptured and recovery - never complete - is long and painful.<sup>16</sup>

This implies that the ecological environment shifts from being mere material context to the basis of life. This redefinition aggrandises the factors that a political and ethical calculus should respect. It opens up a space for moral justification.

Another example of unintended, but morally blameworthy effects, is the possibility that the US administration encouraged a Kurdish and Shi'ite uprising in Iraq at the end of the war, suggesting an assistance that never came. Let us assume that the US did not intend the crushing of the opposition.<sup>17</sup> Was it responsible for it? One could resolve the question by referring to mutual misunderstandings. One could also leave a partial responsibility with the US if it did not make clear that no assistance would be forthcoming. But the more interesting point is that such an action would not have been possible without US intervention in the first place. The question therefore becomes to what extent actors can be held responsible for the secondary effects of their action, if they contributed to change the opportunities for other actors who could anticipate either active help or benevolent indifference.

Mais ce qui était présenté par le gouvernement américain comme une retenue, était perçue sur place comme le comble du cynisme. Les disculpations gênées de Washington ressemblait étrangement aux tentatives des militaires israéliens de jeter sur leurs suppléants locaux la responsabilité de Sabra et Chatila, un massacre qu'ils n'avaient fait qu'"observer" du haut des immeubles environnants mais qui, bien entendu, n'aurait pu être possible sans leur invasion du Liban.<sup>18</sup>

This is not the place to resolve this question. But it seems that structural power as nonintentional power can indeed in particular contexts serve the purpose of opening moral questions about the attribution of responsibility or blame.

#### *Governance and the responsabilisation of the analyst*

The analysis of governance focused on the possible autonomous effect that the dispositions in the Realist discourse have on perception and action. Exactly because governance is about the way practices can govern the creation and mobilisation of dispositions, it is not directly the individual who is responsible. To imply moral blame for the agent would again amount to an erroneous conspiracy theory.

The argument is somewhat complicated by the claim of this power analysis, namely that, although scholars can be at times unaware of their assumptions, becoming aware of

<sup>16</sup> John Vidal, "Poisoned Sand and Seas", pp. 141-142.

<sup>17</sup> One could construct the case, that the US in fact profited most from a weakened Saddam Hussein and a weakened opposition. The sources generally available seem not to corroborate such a Macchiavellian plan.

<sup>18</sup> Ghassan Salamé, "Le Golfe: nuages après la tempête", p. 458.

them and their possible effects implies a self-critique and relativisation of the findings. Once the observer becomes aware of the impact established schemes of thought and action can have on the interpretation (and thus a part) of reality, they should reflect self-critically on it and take it into account in every explanation. One could construct a moral case, if they do not do so without giving persuasive reasons. They acquire responsibility, minimal for the past events, but substantial for not changing the reproduction of common wisdom within their discipline. With regard to the case at hand, it seems that the end of the Cold War should stimulate rather more caution about Realist understandings and practices. To what extent this is a moral issue is to be debated. But references to academic ethics normally include similar items.

## **2.2. The redefinition of political issues**

Si le discours politique sur la crise était si pauvre, c'est que la politique, dans cette crise, était marginale.

Ghassan Salamé, "Petro-dinar...", p. 10.

The Neorealist story which was built upon the theme of avoiding another Vietnam or indeed, of overcoming the Vietnam Syndrome "once and for all". Unwittingly, this produces a perspective in which the major actor's policy is reduced to the attempt to most efficiently translate its power resources into actual influence over outcomes, or, if low fungibility is assumed, to the successful simultaneous management of power in different issue areas.

If both US foreign policy and general power analysis have this as the major puzzle, it is only a small step to consider the successful power management as already an end in itself. Some would say that this is not a particularly new problem. Crises have often produced dynamics in which the contenders lost their initial policy objectives from view. But what is more important is that this focus legitimately restricts the view of the conflict to a technical problem to be solved: US supremacy must be most efficiently applied. At some point the dynamic aspect of Neorealist power analysis was not only theoretically informed by some failures of power management (or calculus) in Vietnam, the "paradox of unrealised power", but became the very objective of the foreign policy attempt. This all the more since Bush's "New World Order" was at best half-heartedly believed in the administration and abroad.

Such a perversion of effective power management from a means to the end of the US (and its major allies') foreign policy in the region implied also that domestic oppositions within and without Parliament, the peace movements, the independent press, all came to be seen as hurdles to an efficient power projection. The intimidation and censorship of the press meant also that the protests, which were of a large scale, were either not covered or became increasingly seen as a nuisance. By mid March 1991 over 3500 actions had

happened and 4000 arrests have been made.<sup>19</sup> The peace movement gathered several million people in protest demonstrations in Europe. If the small GDR protest movements in Leipzig had received a comparable coverage, Honecker would quite probably have been enjoying his post for some additional time. Today hardly anybody would know about Tienanmen. In this reading it is easily justifiable, or indeed it is “normal”, that the aim of winning the Second Gulf War bypassed, undermined, or violated democratic institutions and processes in the very democracies which supposedly went to war to defend democracy against tyranny.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, this means-ends confusion provoked what Ronald Dworkin criticised as a harmful precedent. “Censorship... is defended not of course on the ground that officials are entitled to protect their own political positions... but on the more insidious ground that a pleased and supportive public is a greater military advantage, that a nation can pursue a war more effectively, win it more quickly, and with fewer of its own soldiers dead and wounded, when the public is on its side.”<sup>21</sup>

The outcome of this reduction of politics to an effective power management can also clearly be seen at the end of the conflict where all major powers were confronted with the organisation of peace. Hardly any of the security factors available to a Neorealist power account (see chapter 10) were respected in the building up of the post-war security regime in the Gulf. The decision not to press for domestic reforms in the Gulf countries, the new border line between Iraq and Kuwait which must turn irredentist any Iraqi government, or the unchecked, even encouraged proliferation despite their risks; all this seems to indicate that efficiently winning the war was all what was aimed at.

I insisted in the Neorealist analysis of power on a rather more long-term security analysis. I think this is perfectly compatible, indeed required, by this framework. Thus, even compared with the Neorealist account, the Bush administration failed its purpose: it concentrated on the means and not the end of a military intervention, i.e. the establishment of a more viable security complex in the region. Of course, the short-term stabilisation of the oil regime is an important gain for the US. But the rationality of such one-sided strategies is rightly criticised — by rational choice approaches.

The analysis of governance, moreover, defined several issues as political ones. Of major relevance was the entire political economy of information, its production, private distribution, North-Western monopolies. Similarly, the difficult interlocking of legitimisation processes within and outside the West were drawn to the political attention. Such awareness was not completely absent during the conflict. The French debate referred to the possible increase in anti-Western attitudes, including Muslim fundamentalism, if the West reacted aggressively. But policy-making often seems unaware that fundamentalist reactions to endemic legitimacy crises are not completely autonomous phenomena, de-

<sup>19</sup> Grace Paley, “Somethings about the Peace Movement. Something about the People’s Right *Not* to Know”, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> André Gunder Frank, “Third World War: A political economy of the Gulf War...”, p. 278.

<sup>21</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*, p. 275.



coupled from the rest of the world. Both a political economy of the Third World debt trap and a sociology of intercultural relations can show links and open space for action.

The mobilisation of collective memory is not innocent, and not only with regard to propagandistic purposes. Although the lessons of the past always frame the understanding of the present, the biased choice of symbols and scripts, dictated by today's tactical advantage, selectively reinforces their hold in the future. The Second Gulf War might, in fact, have been a very important moment where the mobilisation of World War and Cold War scripts symbolically led post-Wall thoughts into known territories. Little time and distance is a better excuse for the politician than for the academic. The analysis of governance questions the ease with which the latter were "writing on" history, as if the only change was that now the threat from the USSR or world-communism found a substitute in Third World (potential) nuclear powers. Successful conflict management of this kind aimed at becoming "the founding moment" of a new period, whose characteristics were, by the same token, redefined as classical ones. The scholars has affected the collective memory to justify US intransigence and self-esteem. The "self-description" of the international society of statesmen in the form of its academic community is legitimating established policy.

This leads me to a final point. Power analysis is very often couched in bargaining terms. We get a situation with a dyad of actors, one or multiple games, at one or multiple tables. The enterprise consists in making sense of behaviour, and indirectly to judge the rationality and/or efficiency of actor's choices. This mirrors the policies' obsession with successful power management in which winning is the only aim. There are good reasons to focus on this dynamic step of power analysis. One reduces the relevant variables and, since the focus is on policy-making, comes close to policy-relevant results, as for instance in the organisation of decision-making procedures. If these studies are informed by the "paradox of unrealised power", there is a good chance that, as we have seen, power analysis will become a guide for power politics. Indeed, both interact in defining very narrowly the means and ends of politics. For the Second Gulf War, a power analysis based on a dyad of concepts resulted in a critique of power politics' narrow definition of politics and of Neorealism narrow scientific agenda. The first question of research is not what is the solution, but how do we understand the problem. The present power analysis might help to counter the rather doubtful tendency, that whenever we cannot give any scientific solutions, we can forget about the heuristic problems (not to speak of the political).

### 3. The limits of power

An analysis of power and governance is no panacea. Having hopefully a better power analysis does not resolve the theoretical nightmares of IR/IPE scholars. This caveat, although continuously mentioned during the study, deserves to be repeated because an inherent risk haunts power analyses: very often, power arguments are so "powerful" as to close debates. They are immediately plausible code words; that is, the use of a power argument is sometimes no longer an explanation, *but a substitute for one*. Instead of

opening the analysis, the power argument becomes its final stroke. From being a possible help, it becomes a hindrance to understanding. The present study tried to show that the concept of power is neither self-evident nor unusable if reworked systematically. But it is a limited tool.

Perhaps, this unquestioned plausibility of power is linked to the fact that power politics represented a kind of general international theory. Since the international order, rule, or system was difficult to grasp at first sight, the distribution of power would give us the basic indication of who was responsible for controlling that international system. Power was a shortcut. Yet, once the Realist link between agent power and international rule ceases to be clear, power explanations do not carry the same weight as before. The dyad of concepts makes it clear that power *alone* is not what we were looking for. Power becomes just a specific “momentum” in a wider analysis of power phenomena. In other words, *power loses its function as a main theoretical indicator*.

Accordingly, the concept of power must accept a more humble place. A concept can do no more than the theory in which it is embedded. By itself, it does not provide such a theory. It is even less of a solution to the missing paradigm in IR and IPE, that is the satisfactory conceptualisation of “the international”. Anarchy, system, regime, society, system of rule, and governance are all vague descriptions that hide a central vacuum in IR and IPE theory reminiscent of the concept of the state in domestic political theory. A conceptual analysis of power may be a way to show possible spaces for political action and to lay bare the theoretical vacuum, but it cannot fill it.

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