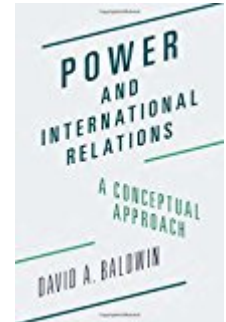


**David A. Baldwin.** *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach.*  
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Political scientists, scholars of international relations, and thinkers have struggled for centuries to explain the role of power in the world and the extent to which it shapes global society and international systems. In *Power and International Relations*, David A. Baldwin gets to the ontological meaning of international relations and foreign policy analysis by resting three of the primary schools of thought in international relations (realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism in that order) on contemporary and classical conceptions of power in modern political analysis. We often ask the question, where do these schools of thought emanate from? What is the driving force behind realist notions of anarchy, self-help, and sovereignty? How does neoliberalism explain world order, democracy and markets, cooperation and collective security? Why does constructivism emphasize culture and norms in understanding the social and ideational underpinnings of global society? Baldwin provides the reader with clear, concise, and distinctive narrative regarding the extent to which power shapes these perennial

schools of thought. The primary thrust of his argument is that schools of thought in international relations rest on a solid foundation of power and the many facets that structure and determine international politics.

The book starts with an introduction to the scholarly foundations of power, focusing particular attention on the conventional wisdom (Robert Dahl, Herbert Simon, James March, and Howard Lasswell), followed up by contending issues in modern power analysis, and the application of convention to understanding realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism. It has been the tendency of many scholars to simply jump right in with both feet and proceed with standard descriptions of power-related concepts that comprise and structure the contending schools or ideologies of thought in international relations. Baldwin avoids this standard approach with his authoritative reinforcement of the significant debates among Dahl and his contemporaries by explaining that notions and variants of pluralism and elitism drive contemporary power analyses. With plural-

ism we see that competing elites and groups in society representing a diversity of viewpoints and interests constitute a powerful brake on authoritarianism and with elitism we can appreciate how concentrated power blocs can reinforce the power of small segments within society who possess a uniformity of values and positions and dominate policymaking and decision-making processes. These conceptual models or competing elucidations evolved to assess the degree with which structures and systems are shaped by power and help us understand power concentration or diffusion. Competing explanations of power do not argue for the existence of authoritarian or democratic versions of governance, but provide us with lenses through which to assess the extent of citizen participation in political systems and whether or not people can tame authority structures.

Baldwin then moves on to describe the study of international realism as a rigorous and serious discipline in the academy, especially in the United States, with American political scientists dominating empirical research and theory. It has almost become standard practice to define international relations in terms of realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism. While these competing schools of thought or ideologies have a very long history in the West, mainly in political science and international relations circles, the scholarship has witnessed incredible intellectual development and evolution since the emergence of the Cold War in international politics. While Baldwin's chapter by chapter descriptions of realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism are relatively straightforward, he continually brings the reader back to the importance of power. Baldwin's assessment of realism focuses primarily on the balance of power, neorealism, and offensive realism. His analysis of constructivism focuses primarily on cultural versus material notions of power and the social construction of knowledge and reality in international politics. Baldwin then discusses how neoliberalism emphasizes the dynamic and complex notion of order and interdependence as well as the

evolving roles played by nongovernmental actors in shaping the international system. Each chapter is connected with an earlier chapter, titled "Power Analysis in IR," in which Baldwin emphasizes power as identity, goal, means, mechanism, competition, and capability.

As Baldwin alludes in his conclusion, most scholars educated in the West or Western-oriented colleges and universities have tended to reinforce a view of the world that aligns with realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism. In many cases, students and scholars alike combine a number of conceptions within each of the three schools to convey their sense of the world and what they perceive or assume are its most relevant political actors shaping the parameters of the international system. Realism and liberalism have dominated the study of international relations in the United States followed by constructivism, although so-called alternative schools of thought, namely Marxism, critical theory, and deconstructivist perspectives, have a much stronger influence in Europe and developing nations. While recognizing the importance of these alternative approaches, Baldwin focuses on realism, constructivism, and neoliberalism as the three primary interpretations for understanding the evolution of power in the modern era.

Although Baldwin succeeds in his conceptual treatment and sophisticated analysis of power and its many forms and applications, the text does not provide the reader with a basic understanding of the practice of power. Put simply, power involves outcomes. It is the ability of a global actor to coerce, command, persuade, and/or seduce others to act in ways they otherwise would not. With available resources, global actors develop their own capabilities, placing them in intense and direct competition and confrontation with other states doing the same thing. Power also involves inducements by actors seeking to shape and determine the actions of other actors with resources, which are the key requirements in deter-

mining whether or not nation-states achieve their goals.

In other words, Baldwin succeeds in conceptualizing power, but the reader is left wanting more explanation regarding the actual exercise of power. For instance, the uncertainty of globalization makes governments feel more vulnerable, forcing them to maximize their power and security. With such uncertainty in the international system about others' intentions, actors desire more resources and power instruments. Baldwin does not expound on why actors want more power. For some, power involves fear, for others it has to do with opportunities to create order, and still others leave room for mutual constitution, social being, language, rules, and identity. However, Baldwin does convince the reader that power is the key to influence since it shapes the extent to which actors respond to one another.

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