

# **Power in Global Politics**

## **How Can We Think About Power?**

### **1. Power As Control**

- The capacity to get someone to do something they don't want to do (Robert Dahl, 1957) -> one of the first clear theoretical articles about power
- There are three approaches to the measurement of power in international relations (Jeffery Hart, 1976):
  - o Control over resources
  - o Control over actors
  - o Control over events

### **Deterrence**

- **Discouraging an action or event through instilling doubt or fear of the consequences**
- "If you do x, I will do y" (deterrence)
- "if you don't do x, I will do/give you y" (compellence)
- "if you do/don't do x, I will give you y" (Incentives)
- Three things required for deterrence to work:
  - o Capability -> you need weapons in order to attack
  - o Communication -> they need to know if you are launching an attack or not
  - o Credibility -> they have to believe you will follow through with your threat to attack

### **The Cold War**

- A conflict in history involving the United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom
- Following World War II and the formation of alliances, Europe was divided
- Countries held nuclear weapons

- Used to keep peace, but were counterintuitive
- 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings caused this viewpoint
- The threat of nuclear missiles used as a form of deterrence
- Communication is required for deterrence

### **1963 Cuban Missile Crisis**

- A lesson in communication
- Soviets gave Cuba nuclear arsenal capable of destroying United States
  - 90 miles from the coast of Florida
  - Threatened to launch if U.S. invaded
  - Closest point where the Cold War escalated into a nuclear holocaust

### **2. Power As Balance**

- “the traditional Indigenous view of power and justice has nothing to do with competition, or status vis-à-vis others: it focuses on whether or not power is used in a way that contributes to the creation and maintenance of balance and peaceful coexistence in a web of relationships.” (Alfred, 1999)

### **3. Power As Structure**

- Structural power:
  - “the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises” (Strange, 1988)
- Related:
  - Gramscian Hegemony
  - Power to make the rules

- Structural violence (Galtung)

#### **4. Power As Hierarchy**

- Countries form alliances and are ruled by leaders, react differently to superpowers
  - The Houthi rebels in Yemen
- Power from below or power apart
- Shift away from colonial lenses as a way of understanding global politics
  - (Pham and Shilliam, 2016)

#### **Power Resources**

- Can be physical or conceptual
  - Physical: money
  - Conceptual: knowledge
- Potential, probable, and actual power
  - Stuff that you have that could generate power
  - Based on what power you're expected to have
  - Based on how well you use that power
- Power resources – [political will; incorrect context; circumstance; power you have may not be *fungible*] – actual power

#### **Hard Power**

- Usually associated with military and economic might

#### **Economic Power**

- Lending and aid power
- Currency power
  - Usually applies to states (but – cryptocurrencies?)
  - Global demand for a currency for the purposes of trade, savings, or settling international accounts

- Market power
  - o Ability to shape supply and demand of a product or service

### **Soft Power**

- Influence: making someone want what you want
- Example: Taylor Swift
  - o \$1.6B net worth
  - o Impact of craft stores
  - o Impact on NFL

### **5. Power As Authority**

- Power + legitimacy = authority
- Power to set the agenda
- Expertise

### **Take Home Points**

- Power is about more than just control of one actor over another
- Power resources can be material or ideational
- Power resources does not always equal actual power
- Power can be inherent in structures, not something possessed by actors