

The Unbearable Banality of Being Apolitical: Power and Politics in International Relations

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〈Abstract〉

It seems that International Relations has not really talked about politics nowadays. It also seems to have become banal as it has stopped yielding impressive political insights. This banality appears even powerful enough to make us question if International Relations is still a sub-discipline of political science. The main source of the banality is instrumental rationalism with which two mainstream approaches in the discipline, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, have imbued themselves. Since instrumental rationalist explanations can make sense mostly in an apolitical condition like self-regulating market, both neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, to the extent that they continue to rely upon instrumental rationalism, could not easily doff the banality. In order to get over the banality and make the discipline interesting again we need to bring politics back into International Relations. The core to politics is power, which can be conceptualized as

control over others through habitual compliance or enforcement. Power is, in this sense, essentially a relational concept. The main reason why neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism have become banal without producing deep insights into international politics is that they fail to equip themselves with such relationally defined notions of power. On the contrary, constructivism, with its emphasis on social structure, looks more promising in this respect, but it has not provided concept(s) of power that can help us overcome the banality yet. After all, what International Relations is in need of is a concept of power that will bring politics back into this discipline.

Key Words: power, politics, instrumental rationality, instrumental rationalism, neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism

It seems that International Relations has not really talked about politics nowadays. Many scholars in this discipline look busy talking about some other things than politics. Even they appear no longer use the word “politics,” as the name of the discipline strongly suggests. The discipline also seems to have become banal as it has stopped yielding impressive political insights. It may sound a little exaggerated, but it would not be totally absurd to say that this banality is powerful enough to make us question if International Relations is still a sub-discipline of political science.

What I intend to demonstrate in this article is that instrumental rationalism is the main source of the banality in International Relations and we should

get it over by bringing politics back into this discipline. As instrumental rationalism, with its core assumption about actor or agent that “[w]hen faced with several courses of action, people usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome,”¹⁾ have prevailed in mainstream International Relations approaches—particularly in neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist theories—the discipline has come to look more like a subfield of Economics. One may wonder if there is anything wrong with this; indeed, it cannot be a problem in and by itself. It can even be of great use in building coherent and parsimonious theories of how states or agents would generally behave. However, combined with the anarchy assumption built on individualist ontology, instrumental rationalism can blind us to *political* reality where instrumental rationality is not applicable to some agents. Instrumental rationalist explanations, strictly speaking, can make sense mostly in an apolitical condition like what Karl Polanyi once termed “self-regulating market,”²⁾ where no social or political structures can significantly interrupt agents’ agencies based on instrumental rationality. But this condition scarcely exists in reality. Political reality is more like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where some are more equal than others; and, most of all, that *unequal equality* makes international political reality very much intriguing. After all, without it political reality would be simply banal. Consequently, both neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, to the extent

1) Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 22.

2) Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*(Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

that they continue to rely upon instrumental rationalism that ignores the unequal equality involved in international politics, could not easily doff the banality. In addition, in so doing they will have more difficulties distilling deep and impressive political insights from their theories. Overcoming the banality prevalent in International Relations, thus, requires politics, where we can delve into the unequal equality, to be brought back into this discipline.

I . What Can Be Politics? Four Faces of Power and Four Dimensions of Politics

If we are asked what interests us—the students of International Relations and Political Science—most, we would be likely to answer that it is politics. Although there are myriads of things going on between and across people, we select our research topics when we believe that they look somehow political. Then, what characterizes politics, or what is the essence of politics? In spite of many attempts to define politics—for example, as “who gets what, when and how,”³⁾ or as “the authoritative allocation of values”⁴⁾—it seems not easy to find out a satisfactory definition especially as it gets more difficult for us to observe who has such authority to distribute values by determining who gets what, when, and how as contemporary politics at

3) Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How*(New York: P. Smith, 1950).

4) David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); and David Easton, *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*, 2nd ed.(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

every level gets more and more complicated. Nevertheless, no matter how we may see politics, as Karl Deutsch once points out, among diverse social relations can politics be distinguished because it involves power relations, which can be characterized by “the more or less incomplete control of human behavior through voluntary habits of *compliance* in combination with threats of probable *enforcement*.”⁵⁾ Though his understanding of politics and power is still behavioralist-oriented, what he implies is crucial to our comprehension of politics: that is, the core of politics is power relations so that we can hardly understand politics without taking into account how some control others or how power works. Power relations, thus, in which some can control others by way of power that they exercise directly and intentionally or indirectly and unintentionally over the behaviors or even over the minds of others, are the key to most politics. Indeed, without discussing power relations what can we talk about politics?

It may sound simple and easy, but it leads us to another conundrum: then, what is power and how does it work? Perhaps, the fact that there could be a great number of ways to control others may make understanding power and politics a daunting and challenging task. As such, many prominent sages of our time have tried to conceptualize power,⁶⁾ but we have not yet any agreed-upon single notion of power. In spite of their attempts, power remains a highly controversial concept, according to Steven

5) Karl W. Deutsch, “On the Concepts of Politics and Power,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.21, No.2(1967), 332. Italics in original.

6) For a good anthology of sociology and political science literature on power, see Steven Lukes, ed., *Power*(New York: New York University Press, 1986).

Lukes, because: the concept is primitive as we define power in reference to other controversial concepts such as interests; it is contested as we depend on various criteria, which reflect our different value assumptions, when we judge what counts as power; and our different ways to conceive of power make us think and act differently.⁷⁾ Nonetheless, many social scientists have recently come to agree that power may be best understood as a multi-dimensional, or four-faced, notion as they have acknowledged the limits of single-dimensional concept in illuminating power relations that lurk in much of the complicated modern social relations.

Since Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan's systematic attempt to see power in terms of causation,⁸⁾ the debates over how power can make different effects have led to the chronological addition of new dimensions or faces to the notion of power. As a result, power is now believed to have up to four faces or dimensions; roughly speaking, first and second faces are concerned about control through enforcement whereas third and fourth faces are concerning control through habitual compliance. The first face of power reflects the most conventional notion as conceptualized behaviorally as coercion that is directly and intentionally exercised over others' behaviors against their interests. In this dimension, as Robert Dahl once defines, power is considered the ability to make others do what they would otherwise not do,⁹⁾ which can be observed in policies that can constrain the

7) Steven Lukes, "Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 477-478.

8) Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950)

9) Dahl defines power as the ability of A to get B to do something which he would

behaviors of others even when their interests are in conflict with the policies.¹⁰⁾ Thus, it is believed that the key to studying politics is observing who make decisions in such ways to make their preferences prevail over others.’ However, as it has turned out that this single-dimensional notion of power is unable to explain a type of power that can be exercised through non-decision or without intentional actions such as direct participation in decision-making, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz give the notion of power a second face, a dimension where power can be exercised through the “mobilization of bias” or agenda setting. The second dimension of power is concerned about rules of the game or institutions as it operates when those in power can protect their vested interests by institutionally limiting the scope of decision making only to the issues that they believe would do good or at least do no harm to their own interests.¹¹⁾

In spite of the conceptual contribution Bachrach and Baratz make, Steven Lukes believes that there is still a loophole that cannot be filled with these two faces of power that he called one-dimensional and two-dimensional view respectively. These two views tend to see power only as a result of observable, overt or covert, conflicts between differing interests, he criticizes,

otherwise not do. See Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science*, Vol.2, No.3(1957), 202.

10) For example, see Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

11) Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Two Faces of Power”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol.56, No.4(1962), 947-952; “Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol.57, No.3(1963), 632-642; and *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

so that both are essentially behavioral and agential since they all consider, explicitly (the former's case) or implicitly (the latter's case), that exercise of power depends on intentional action or inaction of those in power. These behavioralist-oriented concepts, Lukes goes on, treat conflicts as a prerequisite of power, ignoring "the crucial point that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place."¹²⁾ What he calls for, in this respect, is a three-dimensional view of power that can account for control others through voluntary habits of compliance. This face of power is not behavioral since it does not require intentional actions or inactions to exercise power directly over others' behaviors against their interests; rather, it is structural because it operates by shaping "their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in *the existing order of things*, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial."¹³⁾

And yet, those who are inspired by Michel Foucault's works go one step further from the three-dimensional view that Lukes presents, adding one more face to the concept of power.¹⁴⁾ Criticizing that Lukes' three dimensional notion as well as the other aforementioned concepts are built on the

12) Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*(London: Macmillan, 1974), 23.

13) *Ibid.*, 24. Italics added.

14) For Foucault's works on power, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan(New York: Random House, 1977); *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley(New York: Vintage Books, 1980); and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon and translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper(New York: Pantheon, 1980).

premise that there are presupposed subjects whose real interests can be objectively identified but constrained and manipulated by power, these Foucauldians, following Foucault, refuse to take such objective interests as given based on the belief that power is also concerned with “what kind of subject is being produced”¹⁵⁾ in broader and diffuse social contexts. As Peter Digeser demonstrates echoing Foucault, this dimension of power is far from something that a particular group of people can seize and intentionally exercise; rather, it is omnipresent, lurking in our daily social practices in which we, as the “vehicles” of power, take part.¹⁶⁾ The fourth face of power, thus, differs significantly from the other three faces that treat power as “an instrument” that somebody can exercise in order to “alter the independent action of others.” To borrow Clarissa Hayward’s definition, this dimension of power can be conceptualized as “a network of boundaries that delimit, for all, the field of what is socially possible.”¹⁷⁾ Since power, setting these boundaries, “forges a coherent, responsible, rational, modern subject out of a human ‘material’ that does not fit this or any identity without ‘remainder,’”¹⁸⁾ it works through constituting our preferences and demarcating how we realize them in reasonable manners.

What these debates suggest is twofold: first, power is in essence relational; and second, the way we see power determines how we conceive

15) Peter Digeser, “The Fourth Face of Power,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol.54, No.4 (1992), 980.

16) *Ibid.*, 980-986.

17) Clarissa Rile Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

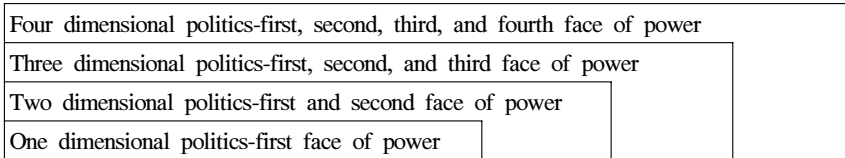
18) *Ibid.*, 5-6.

of politics.¹⁹⁾ On the one hand, how great power resources—such as physical strength, handsome face, or money—one may have, the resources in themselves do not necessarily make him or her who possess them powerful if he or she has no one to control. With no one to control, the resources would guarantee him or her only “power to”—for instance, physical strength can give him or her power to work out, with handsome face he or she can have more power to enjoy self-satisfaction, and by burning money he or she can have power to get some heat when it is cold. Necessarily, without including “power over” any concepts of power will be politically meaningless. On the other hand, the more faces of power we consider, the broader scope of politics we can see. Thus, if we stick to the behavioralist notion of power, *i.e.*, the first and second face of power, the scope of politics we analyze will come to exclude the third and fourth dimension of power. In this case, the control through voluntary habits of compliance will not be considered political at all. In contrast, if we employ all the faces of power we can see more phenomena in terms of politics. This way, we can understand political nature involved in various types of international cooperation that appear to be founded on mutual benefits²⁰⁾ as long as we

19) For example, see Felix Berenskoetter, “Unity in Diversity? Power in World Politics,” paper prepared for presentation at the SGIR Sixth Pan-European Conference, Turin, 12-15 September 2007; and Stefano Guzzini, “The Concept of Power: A Constructivist Analysis,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 495-521

20) International cooperation has been understood this way. For example, see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*(New York: Basic Books, 1984); .Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions,” *World Politics*, Vol.38, No.1(1985), 226-254; and Kenneth A. Oye, ed., *Cooperation Under Anarchy*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

find those faces of power there. Let me illustrate my point further on the basis of figure 1.



<Figure 1> The Scope of Politics

What I present here is the whole scope of politics delineated by four types of power, which is a subset of broader scope of society composed of various social relations. As the figure shows, multi-dimensional notion of power can give us a bigger scope of politics in which we can see those relations which, at first glance, appear far from being political. If we depend on behaviorally defined concepts of power, what we can figure as political will be confined to the one and two dimensional politics, which can be characterized only by the control through enforcement. In so doing we could barely grasp the three and four dimensional politics demarcated by the control through habitual compliance since we would be likely to believe that such control is not political. Necessarily, it will lead us to rather limited understanding of politics, with which we can hardly obtain deeper insights into politics we observe.

Yet, I do not insist that we should apply the multi-dimensional concept to everything we see. Which face of power we need to apply should be determined by the topics we choose for our study. Moreover, we may need

to strike a balance between political insights and theoretical parsimony: one—or two-dimensional concept of power may help us conduct our researches in theoretically more parsimonious and consistent ways, but it could make it difficult to draw more fruitful political insights; in contrast, three—or four-dimensional concept may provide us deeper insights into politics although it could make our researches more complicated. Whichever side we may choose to take, however, we should keep it mind that political insights should not be easily traded for theoretical parsimony. After all, theory is a means to learn about political reality. Otherwise, what do we study politics for? Nobody would answer that we study politics for the sake of theoretical parsimony. Nonetheless, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism have traded political insights for theoretical parsimony as they have relied on instrumental rationalism.

II. Power in Mainstream Instrumental Rationalist Approaches: The Unbearable Banality of Being Apolitical

Unfortunately, those insights accumulated in a series of attempts to understand power have not been well resonated in International Relations until recently,²¹⁾ as instrumental rationality, combined with traditional state-centric view, has come to constitute mainstream approaches in the discipline: *i.e.*

21) For recent efforts to apply these concepts to international politics, see the articles in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3. Also see Berenskoetter, “Unity in Diversity?”

neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism.²²⁾ Since the second great debate when a group of scholars began to introduce so-called more scientific methods to International Relations,²³⁾ much of the mainstream theorists seems to have been concerned more with how they study than with what they study. As an attempt to achieve what can be believed as scientific progress,²⁴⁾ both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists all have explicitly or implicitly included instrumental rationalism in their core assumptions about states and their behaviors, thereby building allegedly political but highly banal theories in spite of the challenges from post-positivists in the third great debate.²⁵⁾ As neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists have

22) For example, see Miles Kahler, "Rationality in International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.52, No.4(1998), 919-941.

23) For the second great debate, see Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau, eds., *Contending Approaches to International Politics*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

24) For the debates what constitute progressive research program, see John A. Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.4(1997), 899-912; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.4(1997), 913-917; Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, "Lakatos and Neorealism: A Reply to Vasquez," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.4(1997), 923-926; and Stephen M. Walt, "The Progressive Power of Realism," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.4(1997), 931-935.

25) For the third great debate, see Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.3(1989), 235-254; Mark Neufeld, *The Restructuring of International Relations Theory*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and John Vasquez, "The Post-positivist Debate: Reconstructing Scientific Enquiry and International Relations Theory after Enlightenment's Fall," in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today*(University Park, Penn: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 217-240.

respectively succeeded in combining what their predecessors used to teach with a more rigid methodology that permits them parsimonious and consistent hypotheses to test, they have made themselves two dominant approaches in the discipline.

However, their dominance has been maintained at two costs. First, relying on instrumental rationalist assumption, which is so tightly intertwined with atomistic or individualist ontology, neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists tend to study essentially political phenomena without taking fully into account the power relations underlying them. Particularly, without being equipped with relationally defined notions of power, their discussions of politics become apolitical and quite often unbearably banal in terms of politics, hardly generating deep and impressive insights into international politics. And second, seeing politics from apolitical points of view, they often lose empirical relevancy in their accounts of political reality. In fact, it would be absurd to expect that apolitical theories can pass empirical tests on political reality.

Although they do not agree on how rationally states calculate their interests, how they interact, and what consequences those interactions bring about,²⁶⁾ both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists are instrumental rationalists who share the view that world politics can be explained in terms of states' instrumental or purposive actions—actions states take to achieve their rationally calculated interests. To what extent states are rational may be controversial²⁷⁾ and their rationality is highly likely bounded rather

26) See, for example, David A. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*(New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

than comprehensive,²⁸⁾ but they explicitly or implicitly include “an instrumental conception of individual rationality, by reference to which people are thought to maximize their expected utilities in formally predictable ways”²⁹⁾ in their accounts of world politics. In this respect, they tend to explain states’ behaviors on the basis of the following syllogism: first, states exogenously define a set of interests on the basis of their preferences;³⁰⁾ second, they devise a series of actions to realize the interests and calculate the benefits and costs each action may entail in varying circumstances; and third, they choose and carry out the actions that they believe are best to realize their interests. In this line of logic, no actions are assumed to be

27) For example, see John Ferejohn, “Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England,” in Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *The Economic Approach to Politics: A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 279-305. Here Ferejohn made distinction between thin-rationalism, which simply focuses on how efficiently agents employ the means to pursue their ends without asking their preferences, and thick-rationalism that pays more attention to the contents of agent preferences and beliefs. Especially p.282.

28) On why states often fail to act on comprehensive rationality, see for example, Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little Brown Allison, 1971); Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Zeev Maoz, *National Choices and International Processes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Alex Mintz, “The Decisions to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision Making,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.37, No.4(1993), 595-618; and John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

29) Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 17.

30) In this sense, instrumental rationalists treat interests as “something with which to do the explaining” rather than as “something to be explained.” For this point, see Mark Blyth, “Structures Do Not Come with an Instruction Sheet: Interests, Ideas, and Progress in Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.1, No.4(2003), 695-706.

meaningless, arbitrary, or whimsical. Even war can be conceived as a means that states employ to obtain certain political objects³¹⁾—for instance, either revising or maintaining existing balance of power—rather than as a ruthless expression of violent human nature. Cooperation also can be thought in this respect to be a consequence of states’ rational attempts to bring themselves more benefits irrespective of how much others can gain.³²⁾ In that sense, it is neither a result of their normative, moralistic, or altruistic gesture nor an outcome of political consideration.

Needless to say, instrumental rationalism has contributed to theoretical development in International Relations as it has made it possible for neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists to build more parsimonious and consistent hypotheses about what states would do in certain circumstances by helping them see seemingly contingent behaviors of states from a more consistent perspective. However, instrumental rationalism, combined with

31) For example, see Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Parat(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Raymond Aron made this point clear in his study of Clausewitz. See Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, translated by Christine Booker and Norman Stone (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985).

32) Debates over how—either in a relative sense or in an absolute sense—states define gains involved in international cooperation, see Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*. Also see Joseph M. Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism,” *International Organization* Vol.42, No.3(1988), 485-507 and *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-tariff Barriers to Trade*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*, Vol.19, No.3(1994/95), 5-49; and Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” *International Security*, Vol.20, No.1(1995), 39-51.

apolitically conceptualized notion of the international system, has led neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists to ignore power relations, the core of politics, in their analyses of international politics. Consider how Kenneth Waltz conceives of international politics based on his notion of anarchic international system:

The parts of domestic political systems stand in relations of super—and subordination. Some are entitled to command; others are required to obey. Domestic systems are centralized and hierarchic. The parts of international-political systems stand in relations of coordination. Formally, each is the equal of all the others. None is entitled to command; none is required to obey. International systems are decentralized and anarchic.³³⁾

What Waltz implies here is that international politics is characterized not only by the absence of centralized authority but also by the absence of power relations or any other social relations. Thus, according to this notion, the international system where states act and interact with one another is anarchic plus apolitical and asocial. In this particular circumstance, states are considered essentially equal in the sense that they all can act on their own instrumental rationality. As neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists have built their theories on this notion, those political phenomena with which they are concerned such as balance of power or institutionalized cooperation have been understood as a function of each state's purposive actions and interactions between them.

33) Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*(Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 88.

Necessarily, they are inclined to see power from materialist point of view, thereby indicating a conceptual setback from a relational concept of power traditionalists used to have. On the one hand, neorealists, taking what Brian Schmidt dubs the “elements of national power approach,”³⁴⁾ tend to conceive power in terms of material resources that states can employ for military purposes. For example, Kenneth Waltz aptly shows this tendency in his concept of balance of power, characterized by distribution of capabilities between states, which consist of “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.”³⁵⁾ Robert Gilpin takes a similar yet a little simplified version of this view, defining power as “the military, economic, and technological capabilities of states.”³⁶⁾ John Mearsheimer also presents a simpler definition that power is “nothing more than specific assets or material resources that are available to a state.”³⁷⁾ And yet, this approach has three critical problems. First, it fails to handle the “paradox of unrealized power,” the failure of power resources to be translated into actual control over others.³⁸⁾ As the results of the Korean War and the Vietnam War have

34) Brian Schmidt, examining the various concepts of power of classical, structural, neoclassical realists, suggests that they all endorse the elements of national power approach. See Brian C. Schmidt, “Competing Realist Conceptions of Power,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 523-549.

35) Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 131.

36) Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

37) John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*(New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 57.

38) For the paradox of unrealized power, see David A. Baldwin, “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies,” *World Politics*, Vol.31, No.2

shown, the greater amount of power resources does not always guarantee the control over others. Just simply assuming that such resources are fungible, neorealists commit what Lukes calls the “vehicle fallacy.”³⁹⁾ Second, this approach often leads neorealists to tautology. As Stefano Guzzini properly points out, neorealists fall victim to circular logic by using state power to account for many outcomes of international politics but at the same time by relying on such outcomes to assess state power.⁴⁰⁾ And finally, therefore, it does not help neorealists talk much about politics. Struggling, or even war, between states for more resources can be seen as political, if and only if greater resources enable them to control others in one way or another. Simply describing international politics as a mere struggle for more resources without saying who control whom and how can be considered at best an interesting anecdote.

This materialistic concept of power is a significant conceptual setback from the relational concept of power that classical realists used to hold. When Hans Morgenthau entitled his book *Politics Among Nations*, what he meant by “politics” must have been the struggle for relationally defined power, which means “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men.”⁴¹⁾ As Raymond Aron properly asserted, power on the international

(1979), 163-175.

39) Vehicle fallacy is the view that power means “whatever goes into operation when power is activated.” Steven Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 478.

40) Stefano Guzzini, “Structural Power: the Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis,” *International Organization*, Vol.47, No.3(1993), 449.

41) Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed.(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 32.

scene is “the capacity of a political unit to impose its will upon other units ... political power is not an absolute; it is a human relationship.”⁴²⁾ Their definitions of power are still focused on the first face covering only the one dimensional politics presented in figure 1, but they can tell us more about why states are concerned about greater resources than neorealists can. With the conceptual setback, which is an unavoidable consequence of their accommodation of instrumental rationalism under the rubric of scientific methods, neorealists actually leave the very core of politics—power relations that make possible the control through enforcement or habitual compliance—largely unexplained.

On the other hand, neoliberal institutionalists even appear to be no longer interested in power as they employ more strict logic of instrumental rationality. Strongly determined to prove that states can cooperate with one another in spite of their selfish motivations in anarchy where no one can be trusted, they seem no longer believe that they still belong to political science departments. Though they share the core assumptions with neorealists as to the anarchic nature of the international system and states as principal

However, Morgenthau also endorsed the elements of national power approach as well. See 127-169.

42) Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 47. Aron also believed that power needs to be backed by certain resources. He suggested three fundamental elements for power: first, the occupied space; second, the available resources and the techniques for weapons and the number of men for combatants; and the collective capacity for action determined by the organization of the army, the organization of the army, the discipline of the combatants, the quality of the civil and military command, and the solidarity of the citizens. the political units occupy. See *ibid.*, 54.

actors who are rational egoists, the way they describe politics is more similar to the way economists depict market economy. Like mainstream neoclassical economists who presume market, as long as it works perfectly, brings everybody benefits under the guidance of invisible hand, neoliberal institutionalists seem to believe that institutions can bring states greater benefits by helping them work together. Even if states know that they will gain more through cooperation, according to neoliberal institutionalists, they would hardly work together because they, as rational egoists, will try to exploit each other through defection. In this circumstance, they argue, institutions, as “persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations,”⁴³⁾ create the conditions for such rational egoists to work together by making defection costly and by rewarding cooperative actions.⁴⁴⁾

This way they explain international cooperation that most realists even refuse to believe in, yet they do so at the cost of politics; no power relations considered so that virtually no political insights presented. Indeed, they approach to institutions as if they are economists rather than political scientists.⁴⁵⁾ In this rather economist approach, it is almost entirely forgotten

43) Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*(Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 3.

44) See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Keohane and Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,”; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*; Axelrod and Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy”; and Oye, *Cooperation Under Anarchy*.

45) Terry Moe makes a similar point too. See Terry M. Moe, “Power and Political Institutions,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol.3, No.2(2005), 215-233. Similarly, see

a political possibility that some states have no other choice but to join institutions not to expect greater gains but in order to avoid greater losses.⁴⁶⁾

As long as politics is concerned, therefore, this is a more serious conceptual setback from their earlier notions of power conceptualized in terms of material benefits. In their attempt to rebut realist emphasis on high politics and military capability, for example, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye maintained that military capability does not consummate power because it is not fungible. In complex web of interdependence between states, they argued, varying degree of sensitivity and vulnerability states have on the basis of their resources in specific issue areas eventually determine who has more power.⁴⁷⁾ Following Jeffrey Hart who claimed that power needs to be considered as the control over outcomes rather than over resources and actors,⁴⁸⁾ Keohane and Nye specifically defined power as “control over resources, or the potential to affect outcomes.”⁴⁹⁾ This twofold concept is still not political enough since it does not show how the control over certain resources can be turned into the control over outcomes without controlling, intentionally or unintentionally, others. In this respect, thus, they

also Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

46) For this argument, see Lloyd Gruber, *Ruling the World: Power Politics and the Rise of Supranational Institutions*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

47) Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977). For the definitions of sensitivity and vulnerability, see 11-19.

48) Jeffrey Hart, “Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations,” *International Organization*, Vol.30, No.2(1976), 289-305.

49) Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 11.

committed “the benefit fallacy”—if power means getting benefits by somehow controlling political outcomes, then, as Guzzini properly points out, free-riders should be considered to exercise power as well.⁵⁰) And yet, in spite of this fault, it can be assessed that Keohane and Nye were concerned with the role of power in international politics at least at that time. Stopping talking about power anymore, neoliberal institutionalists have made their studies of international politics strongly banal.

As such, politics, if it could be called that way, which neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists talk about, is relatively simple: that is, international politics is a function of purposive actions that states take to achieve what they want. Their theories, hence, come to look more parsimonious and even more consistent in comparison to any other schools in International Relations. However, building theories based on instrumental rationalism in combination with the notion of ontologically atomistic international system, they fail to get to the core of international politics, thus, hardly providing any significant insights into international politics. Without proper concept of power they cannot get out of the banality they have created.

If the banality could help us understand political reality better, we would have no problem with applying instrumental rationalism to international politics. Yet, instrumental rationalism distorts political reality we are supposed to study. After all, the assumption of instrumental rationality can be valid only within one particular context out of various social relations: that is, the context of, to borrow Karl Polanyi’s words, the self-regulating market.

50) Guzzini, “Structural Power,” 469.

Should instrumental rationality were a natural and universal principle by which all human agents abide, not only economics but also politics could be explained from this perspective. If that is the case, then, there would be no clear boundary between economics and political science. But, as Polanyi demonstrated long ago, neither the self-regulating market has ever actually existed nor it will come into being. In addition, according to him, the self-regulating market is what mercantilist states, or more generally politics, constitute.⁵¹⁾ In this sense, instrumental rationality itself is political. This is why we, as those who are interested in what can be called politics, should call the theoretical validity of instrumental rationalism into question in the beginning rather than simply accept it. Indeed, states are not equal not just because they have different military or economic capabilities but because some are able to understand and get what they really need and want through their actions while others are not. As a political scientist, we should not take for granted that all states are equal in the sense that they all act on instrumental rationality as a sovereign entity. We should pay attention to the fact that *some states are more equal than others* and try to understand why and how.

Recently even some game theorists in economics have started to express their skeptical view on instrumental rationalism. For instance, Robert Aumann and Brian Arthur admit that “homo rationalis [a species that acts purposefully and logically] is a mythical species,” and “[i]f one were to imagine the vast collection of decision problems economic agents might

51) Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.

conceivably deal with as a sea or an ocean, with the easier problems on top and more complicated ones at increasing depth, then deductive rationality would describe human behavior accurately within a few feet of the surface.”⁵²) If so, why should political scientists stick to it?⁵³)

III. Is Constructivism More Political? Its Limits and Promises

Although constructivism, as an alternative approach to neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, challenges the instrumental rationalist assumption about actors and their behaviors in the anarchic—social or apolitical—international system by emphasizing the role of ideas or ideational structure in constituting actors’ identities and interests that affect how they act, it in itself does not talk much about politics either for two reasons: first, it lacks a notion of power conceptualized in terms of relation; and second, without its own relationally conceptualized notion of power it tends to fail to set

52) Robert J. Aumann, “What Is Game Theory Trying to Accomplish?” in Kenneth Arrow and Seppo Honkapohja, eds., *Frontiers of Economics*(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 28-76; and W. Brian Arthur, “Inductive Reasoning and Bounded Rationality,” *American Economic Review*, Vol.84, No.2(1994), 406-411. All quoted from Arthur A. Stein, “The Limits of Strategic Choice: Constrained Rationality and Incomplete Explanation,” in David A. Lake and Robert Powell, eds., *Strategic Choice and International Relations*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 217.

53) For a more recent and noteworthy critic of rationalist approach in social and human sciences, see Ian Shapiro, *The Flight from Reality in the Human Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

the boundary between political and social relations. However, in spite of these two problems, constructivism overall looks more promising in helping us apply the four faces of power to international relations because of its emphasis on the roles of ideas, constitution, and structure.

Critical of dominant instrumental rationalist approaches that conceive international politics in terms of strategic interactions between states as atomistic actors, who seek interests that are exogenously determined prior to such interactions, constructivists have developed the following core assumption about actors: that is, states are social actors who pursue interests that are endogenously determined to social interactions. Based on this assumption, they emphasize ideational factors such as shared ideas, beliefs, values that constitute cultural or normative structures together with material conditions in understanding international politics because, they believe, these factors eventually turn individual states into social agents and affect and effect their behaviors. More specifically, they hold that these nonmaterial or ideational structures define actors' identities that condition their interests, thereby leading them to act accordingly. Nevertheless, constructivists do not claim that the relationship between structures and agents is one-sided in which the latter depends on the former; they are mutually constituted in the sense that the former cannot exist without meaningful practices of the latter.⁵⁴⁾

54) Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*(New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold*

So far so good in the sense that constructivists, with their emphasis on the role of ideas in constituting different interests, can account better for the behaviors that look deviant when viewed from the perspectives of neorealists or neoliberal institutionalists—for instance, why certain states such as Japan and Germany do not care as much about security as other states.⁵⁵) But, constructivists do not proffer significant insights into politics yet as they, despite their concern with social relations, do not take power relations seriously. Until recently when a group of constructivists have

War(New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 127-165; Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-realism as the Science of Realpolitik Without Politics," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.19, No.1(1993), 63-80; Vendulka Kubálková, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert, eds., *International Relations in a Constructed World* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," *International Organization*, Vol.47, No.1(1993), 139-174; Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics*(New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 131-157; Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization*, Vol.41, No.3(1987), 335-370; Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vo.46, No.2 (1992), 391-425; Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security*, Vol.20, No.1(1995), 71-81; and Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

- 55) For example, see Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Katzenstein, ed., *Tamed Power: Germany in Europe*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency*(Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007).

finally begun to take power more seriously,⁵⁶⁾ many constructivists have tried to prove that ideas causally matter in states' behaviors and policies rather than discuss how they politically matter. Consider Alexander Wendt for example. He asserts that seeing international politics in terms of power relations is not “a *uniquely* Realist claim,”⁵⁷⁾ yet he remains relatively quiet on exactly what he means by power relations through his works. Rather, he conceives power also in terms of material resources under the rubric of “rump materialism,” though he contends that material power gains intersubjective meanings in social structures.⁵⁸⁾ Other constructivists also keep silence on power. In most empirical researches constructivists have given priority to ideas and treated them simply as a causal variable to explain specific actions of states,⁵⁹⁾ despite Wendt's claim that “ideas all the way down” if and only if they constitute the material conditions like the distribution of interests and material power.⁶⁰⁾ As Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro properly point out, many mainstream constructivists have actually treated ideational factors as if they are an exogenously given causal variable.⁶¹⁾ In this

56) For example, see Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security*, Vol.23, No.1(1998), 171-200; and more recently, see Guzzini, “The Concept of Power.”

57) Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 97.

58) *Ibid.*, 109-113.

59) Most notably, see Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

60) *Ibid.*, 135.

61) Kowert and Legro in this respect propose to ask where norms come from. For this point, see Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, “Norms, Identities, and Their Limits: A

respect, it is not surprising to see, as Friedrich Kratochwil implies, that constructivist approach has not yet succeeded in producing political theories.⁶²⁾ Indeed, it is even ironical that constructivists have not presented the notion of power conceptualized relationally given the fact that they have highlighted social structures. Without having such a relational concept of power they would not be able to set the conceptual and analytical boundaries between political and social phenomena. Consequently, they could not demonstrate how ideas politically matter; and it would be unclear what they are really talking about—international politics or international society.

Nonetheless, I believe that constructivism, with its emphasis on ideas, constitution, and structure, has a conceptual and analytical comparative advantage that can help us see and deal with a more comprehensive political dimension. Remind that the first and second faces of power involve the control through enforcement over those who have conflicting interests whereas the third and fourth faces of power are concerning the control through habitual compliance. In fact, we can scarcely understand politics involving the third and fourth faces unless we take into account how actors' identities and interests are constituted, thereby their social capacities are delimited in more particular social relations (the third face of power) or in much

Theoretical Reprise,” in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, particularly 469-483.

62) Kratochwil suggests that cultural theories can hardly substitute for political theories. See Friedrich V. Kratochwil, “Is the Ship of Culture at Sea or Returning?” in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 206. After all, he assesses that constructivism is yet an approach rather than a theory, calling for development of political theories.

broader social relations (the fourth face of power). Also consider that the first two types of power are prone to committing what Lukes calls “the exercise fallacy”⁶³⁾ because of their behaviorist orientation exclusively focused on directly and intentionally exercised power in terms of causation, while the latter types of power generally operate in “indirect, nonintentional, and impersonal” manners through constitution⁶⁴⁾ even without actors’ direct intention to exercise power. Only constructivist assumption that actors’ behaviors are disposed by their socially *constituted* identities and interests in the *structures* of shared *ideas* such as knowledge, beliefs, and values⁶⁵⁾ will make it possible for us to grasp politics where these third and fourth faces of power are prevalent.

More specifically, the merit of constructivist approach is twofold. First, constructivism, highlighting the constitutive effects of ideas on actors’ identities and interests, can broaden our understanding of politics: politics may include power struggles in which actors try either to get more material resources or to strike a deal on how the resources are distributed via control through enforcement, but it may also involve struggles that can be characterized by, to borrow Lukes’ terms, the “battle for hearts and minds” through discursive social practices,⁶⁶⁾ which can induce control through

63) The exercise fallacy means that power is understood only as “causing of an observable sequence of events.” Steven Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds,” 478.

64) Guzzini understands structural power this way. See Guzzini, “Structural Power.”

65) See Alexander Wendt’s “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” “Constructing International Politics,” and *Social Theory of International Politics*, 113-135.

66) Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds.”

habitual compliance. In fact, constructivists are not the only ones who are interested in ideas; some neoliberal institutionalists have already taken ideas into consideration, claiming that ideas work causally via institutions.⁶⁷⁾ However, the hypotheses they set and test can barely address the third and fourth faces of power since they are not concerned with constitution; in other words, their explanations are generally doomed to fail to reflect a broader political dimension. For instance, consider Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power," which consists of intangible power resources such as political and cultural values, ideology, and visions and allegedly works through attraction based on its ideological and cultural appeals rather than through coercion.⁶⁸⁾ One may believe that Nye's concept could cope with the third and fourth faces of power as it seems able to explain habitual compliance. But his account of how it works—states would be subject to soft power if the values it represents look attractive because of their universal orientation⁶⁹⁾—is not convincing because of his negligence of constitution. Without discussing the constitutive effects of such ideational factors as values,

67) For the studies that focused on the causal effects of ideas, see Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Goldstein, *Ideas, Interests, and American Trade Policy*(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Goldstein, "Ideas, Institutions, and American Trade Policy," *International Organization*, Vol.42, No.1(1988), 179-217.

68) Joseph S., Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*(New York: Public Affairs, 2004); and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and William A. Owens, "America's Information Edge," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.75, No.2 (1996), 20-36.

69) For example, see Nye, *Soft Power*, 111.

ideology, or visions that make them universal and attractive, Nye manages to avoid committing the exercise fallacy but fails to correct it. Janice Mattern criticizes Nye's concept of soft power in this respect, arguing that soft power is not soft at all because it is also coercive. It is so, according to her, since soft power is a result of verbal fights over the "true" meaning of "reality," whether reality is backed by evidence or not, via "representational force" that refers to the ability of agents to define reality surrounding their Self through their own narratives. What she focuses on is constitutive effects of ideas: that is, reality is socio-linguistically constituted by the winner of verbal fights; and as losers accept the winner's viewpoint of reality and redefine their ontological security or their own Self accordingly, they feel attracted to it.⁷⁰⁾ As such, constructivism can deepen our apprehension of politics as it can direct our attention even to how ideas are constituted through argumentation, deliberation, or persuasion,⁷¹⁾ by which we might not be so mesmerized if we see politics only in terms of the first and second faces of power.

And second, constructivism, with its ontology that agents and structures are mutually constituted, can help us come up with and test more hypotheses on how power works. Unlike neorealists or neoliberal institutionalists who

70) Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 583-612.

71) For example, Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue!: Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.54, No.1(2000), 1-39; and Richard Ned Lebow, "Power, Persuasion and Justice," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.33, No.3(2005), 551-581.

understand structure in terms of agents' individual properties or world-system theorists who reify structure independently of agents, constructivists hold that social structures can condition identities and interests of agents who are embedded in them, but at the same time, they cannot exist independently of the agents, or in other words, without the practices of agents.⁷²⁾ To borrow Wendt's term, social structures "supervene" on agents.⁷³⁾ In this respect, to rephrase Karl Marx, agents can make history, but not in exact conditions of their own choosing. After all, what David Dessler believes is at stake in the agent-structure debate is to what extent agents can affect the structure through *intentionally* setting the *rules*, both regulative and constitutive, for action: structure constrains agents' behaviors, but it is simultaneously the outcome as well as the medium of their actions based on the rules.⁷⁴⁾ Constructivism, making it possible for us on the basis of this ontology to pay more attention to how the very social structures where agents develop particular intersubjective understanding about themselves and others are reproduced⁷⁵⁾ or to how the contexts that determine the parameters of socially, politically, and economically possible actions are shaped,⁷⁶⁾ can

72) Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory."

73) For the concept of supervenience, see Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 155-157.

74) David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?" *International Organization*, Vol.43, No.3(1989), 441-473. Dessler argues that intentional rules are the missing part in the definition of Waltz's positional model of structure. He asserts that actions are mediated through both regulative rules that "prescribe and proscribe behavior in defined circumstances" and constitutive rules that "create or define new forms of behavior." See 454-455.

75) Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," 177-180.

give us more opportunities to understand the political dimension where power works through the mutual constitution between agents and structures. Undoubtedly, compared to other approaches constructivism can provide us more diverse angles to set hypotheses on how power operates not only causally but also constitutively. In short, constructivism, to the extent that it can present a more solid concept of power that incorporates all the faces of power, can make a better alternative to neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism for grasping and explaining politically even those phenomena that look seemingly nonpolitical or apolitical.

IV. Bringing Power Back into International Relations

I believe it is worth examining one recent attempt made by two prominent International Relations scholars to conceptualize power based on the conceptual and theoretical achievements in constructivism before I conclude this article. Reflecting upon significant conceptual underdevelopment of power in International Relations, Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, based on the insights from constructivism, define power as “the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate.”⁷⁷⁾ This definition at first glance may look too comprehensive to have analytical validity, but it is in fact

76) Colin Hay, “Divided by a Common Language: Political Theory and the Concept of Power,” *Politics*, Vol.17, No.1(1997), 45-52.

77) Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol.59, No.1(2005), 42.

carefully devised to help us see politics from a deeper and broader yet not too extensive perspective. That is, as elucidating that power is about “how these effects work to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others,”⁷⁸⁾ they carefully set the boundary between political and other social relations: not so realistic, probably rare, but to the extent that those joint actions through mutual agreement, persuasion, and collective choice do not produce such effects that favor only some actors, they are not political. In addition, they also admit that there is no single, catch-all concept of power. Inspired by the conceptual development of power made in sociology, thus, they reconceptualize the four faces of power in the context of international relations, and classify them into four different categories using two dimensions: first, how power works—through interaction or constitution; and second, in what kinds of relations it works—in direct and specific or socially diffuse relations.⁷⁹⁾ Their taxonomy of power can be presented as follows in figure 2.⁸⁰⁾

		Relational specificity	
		Direct	Diffuse
Power works through	Interactions of specific actors	Compulsory	Institutional
	Social relations of constitution	Structural	Productive

<Figure 2> Taxonomy of Power

78) *Ibid.*, 42.

79) For more detailed explanations of these two dimensions, see *ibid.*, 45-49.

80) *Ibid.*, 48.

Let me briefly examine these concepts of power. First, compulsory power works when one actor can shape directly the circumstances or actions of others employing their material or nonmaterial resources. This notion of power is evidently as much behavioral as the first face of power, defined as direct control over others even if a sequence of exercised compulsory power is not what originally intended.⁸¹⁾ Second, institutional power is present when one actor indirectly controls others, as guiding and constraining the actions and conditions of existence of others, through formal or informal institutions that mediate between them on the basis of the rules and procedures that define the institutions. This type of power can be exercised, like the second face of power, through inaction: that is, without mobilizing particular power resources, without controlling institutions themselves, and even without making any decisions, one can exercise power over spatially and temporally distant others as institutional arrangements shape the agenda-setting process in his or her own favor.⁸²⁾ Third, structural power, defined as direct and mutual constitution of the capacities of actors,

81) Barnett and Duvall suggest that intentionality does not necessarily characterize compulsory power. As they explain, collateral damage of bombing campaigns, such as civilian casualties who are exposed to compulsory power even if bombers do not intend to exercise such power over them, is one of the examples of unintentionally exercised compulsory power. In this sense, their concept of compulsory power is a little different from conventional notion of the first face of power. See *ibid.*, 49-51.

82) *Ibid.*, 51-52. Barnett and Duvall make clear that their approach to institutions is different from neoliberal institutionalist approach. Whereas neoliberal institutionalist tend to focus on the functional aspect of institutions, concerned mainly with how they facilitate cooperation and coordination among participants, they pay more attention to the political aspect, pointing out that institutions create winners and losers as institutional power results in uneven distribution of collective rewards. See *ibid.*, 52.

manifests itself when it affects the ideas of others as to who they are, what their interests are, and what they can do through social structure,⁸³⁾ where their identities and interests are socially constituted in terms of direct relations to one another. As Barnett and Duvall demonstrate, structural power operates by shaping the fates and conditions of existence of actors: as structure constitutes unequal social privileges and capacities by allocating differential capacities and advantages to different structural positions (e.g. master and slave); and as structure shapes their identities and subjective interests in such ways to “constrain them from recognizing their own dominion.”⁸⁴⁾ After all, to the extent that the extant social structure, where those identities and interests uphold unequal and differential social capacities and privileges, is reproduced, one can have power even without taking specific actions to control others.⁸⁵⁾ And finally, as an attempt to incorporate the fourth face of power into the discipline, Barnett and Duvall come up with the notion of productive power, defined as production of subjects through diffuse social relations. Productive power operates in similar manners with structural power in the sense that both involve social

83) Structure can be defined differently, but the core of constructivist concept of structure is an “internal relation,” in which particular social agents can exist only by virtue of their relations to other agents, as masters exist only in their relations to their slaves. This notion of structure is developed by scientific realists, or critical realists. See Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1997) and *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998); and Andrew Sayer, *Realism and Social Science* (London: SAGE, 2000) and *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (London: Routledge, 1992).

84) Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 53.

85) For more detailed explanation on structural power, see *ibid.*, 52-55.

constitution of identities and interests, but the former works in more diffuse and contingent social relations while the latter in more direct structural relations. More specifically, productive power operates as it constitutes social subjects from much broader social scope and sets the boundaries for imaginable and possible social fields of action through discursive processes and practices. For instance, stigmatizing certain states as “rogue states” is one of the examples that show how productive power operates: to the extent that its meaning is fixed in discursive practices, it thereby outlines what kinds of practices and policies toward them are possible, imaginable, permissible, and even desirable.⁸⁶⁾ As Barnett and Duvall try to prove, albeit briefly, in their discussion on global governance and American empire, this fourfold typology can lead us to more comprehensive yet deeper understanding of international politics or power relations among states.⁸⁷⁾

As they show in their discussion of power, diverse power relations permeate international politics, and that is why international politics looks intriguing and interesting. If we could elucidate why some states or other agents act in certain ways just in terms of instrumental rationality without taking into account in and through what social relations they do so, International Relations would be better off being a sub-discipline of Economics. Many students in this discipline, then, can be free from all the lists of reading requirement, ranging from philosophy, history, psychology to sometimes even mathematics. However, if that happens, what most International Relations scholars talk about will sound a lot more unbearably

86) *Ibid.*, 55-57.

87) *Ibid.*, 57-66.

banal to those, including myself, who are interested in why and how some are more equal than others. After all, is it not power, rather than instrumental rationality, which makes some are more equal than others? Can we get deeper insights into international politics just from instrumental rationalist points of view in this case? What is urgently required in International Relations is concepts of power that will bring politics back into this discipline. Without them, how can we talk about politics?

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【 국문초록 】

물정치성의 참을 수 없는 진부함: 국제관계에서의 권력과 정치

정성원(뉴욕시립대)

오늘날의 국제관계학은 정치에 대해 그리 말하고 있는 것 같지 않다. 국제관계학은 인상깊은 정치적 통찰을 더 이상 제공하지 않게 됨으로써 심지어 진부해진 것 같기도 하다. 이러한 진부함으로 인해 국제관계학은 더 이상 정치학의 하위분야가 아닌 것처럼 보이기까지도 한다. 이 진부함의 근본적 원인은 국제관계학의 두 주류 접근법인 신현실주의와 신자유주의가 수용한 도구적 합리주의이다. 도구적 합리성에 근거한 설명은 자기조절적 시장과 같은 물정치적인 조건에서 대체로 타당성을 갖는 것이기에, 지속적으로 도구적 합리주의에 의지한다면 신현실주의와 신자유주의적 제도주의는 이러한 진부성을 쉽게 떨쳐내지 못하게 될 것이다. 진부성을 극복하고 국제관계학 분야를 다시 흥미있게 만들기 위해서 정치가 국제관계학에 복귀되어야 할 필요가 있다. 정치의 핵심은 권력인데, 이는 습속적 복종 또는 강제를 통한 타인에 대한 지배로 개념화될 수 있다. 이러한 의미에서 권력은 본질적으로 관계적인 개념이다. 신현실주의와 신자유주의적 제도주의가 국제정치에 대한 깊은 통찰력을 생산해 내지 못하고 진부해져 버린 주요 원인은, 바로 이들이 관계적으로 정의된 권력 개념을 갖추는 데 실패했기 때문이라 할 수 있다. 대조적으로 구성주의는 사회적 구조를 강조하기에 이러한 측면에서 보다 도움이 될 것 같아 보이지만, 아직은 진부성을 극복하는 데 도움이 될 만한 권력개념을 제공하지는 못하고 있다. 결국 국제관계학이 필요로 하고 있는 것은 이 학술분야에 정치를 되돌려 줄 권력개념이라 할 수 있다.

주제어: 권력, 정치, 도구적 합리주의, 신현실주의, 신자유주의적 제도주의, 구성주의

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