



**Power and International Relations:** the concept of power, IR theories on power, and the usability on contemporary issues

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이 순간의 느낌 함께하는 거야  
다시 만난 우리의  
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### ABSTRACT

The association of power as an observable event to human groups happens since the most primitive groupings. This event becomes complex as these groups evolve and become complex societies structured around various institutions, norms and practices that seem inherent to their existence. To understand the concept of power is to understand how reality is constructed and modified, from the point where one actor is able to interfere in the actions of another, to the actions of a state at the international level. Based on this, this work revisited the main systematic studies of power, focusing on relational and structural forms, identifying their respective variables and usability. Then, it expanded the discussion to the neorealist, neoliberal and constructivist theories of International Relations as a way to understand how such an event is observed and defined by each theorist. From this, this work can identify that the concept of power, for being something inherent to a particular group of human beings or to a temporal or spatial space, is still extremely valid for contemporary problems, serving as an excellent analytical tool to interpret realities and design processes. This result also reinforces the importance of the person analysing in knowing how to operate the defining instruments, both within their singularities and together.

**Keywords:** power, international relations, theory

### RESUMO

A associação de poder enquanto evento observável a grupos humanos acontece desde os agrupamentos mais primitivos. Esse evento se torna complexo à medida que esses grupos evoluem e se tornam sociedades complexas e estruturadas ao redor de diversas instituições, normas e práticas que parecem ser inerentes à sua existência. Entender o conceito de poder é entender como a realidade é construída e modificada, indo desde o ponto que um ator consegue interferir na ação do próximo até a atuação de um Estado a nível internacional. A partir disso, esse trabalho revisitou os principais estudos sistemáticos de poder com concentração nas formas relacionais e estrutural, identificando suas respectivas variáveis e usabilidade. Em seguida, expandiu a discussão para as teorias neorrealista, neoliberal e construtivista das Relações Internacionais como forma de entender como tal evento é observado e definido por cada teórico. A partir disso, este trabalho pode identificar que o conceito de poder, por ser algo inerente a um só grupo de seres humanos e/ou a um espaço temporal ou espacial, ainda é algo extremamente válido para os problemas contemporâneos, servindo de excelente ferramenta analítica para interpretar realidades e desenhar processos. Esse resultado também reforça a importância da pessoa analisar saber operar os instrumentos definindo, tanto dentro de suas singularidades como, também, em conjunto.

**Palavras-chave:** poder, relações internacionais, teoria

### **ABSTRAIT**

L'association du pouvoir en tant qu'événement observable aux groupes humains se produit depuis les groupements les plus primitifs. Cet événement se complexifie à mesure que ces groupes évoluent et deviennent des sociétés complexes structurées autour de diverses institutions, normes et pratiques qui semblent inhérentes à leur existence. En comprenant le concept de pouvoir, on comprend comment la réalité est construite et modifiée, depuis le point où un acteur est capable d'intervenir dans les actions d'un autre, jusqu'aux actions d'un État en matière internationale. Sur cette base, ce document a revisité les principales études systématiques du pouvoir en se concentrant sur les formes relationnelles et structurelles, en identifiant leurs variables respectives et leur utilité. La discussion s'est ensuite étendue aux théories néoréalistes, néolibérales et constructivistes des Relations Internationales afin de comprendre comment un tel événement est observé et défini par chaque théoricien. À partir de là, ce travail peut identifier que le concept de pouvoir, pour être quelque chose d'inhérent à un seul groupe d'êtres humains ou à un espace temporel ou spatial, est encore quelque chose d'extrêmement valable pour les problèmes contemporains, servant d'excellent outil analytique pour interpréter les réalités et les processus de conception. Ce résultat renforce également l'importance pour l'analysant de savoir comment utiliser les instruments de définition, à la fois dans leurs singularités et aussi ensemble.

**Mots-clés :** pouvoir, relations internationales, théorie

### **RESUMEN**

La asociación del poder como hecho observable a los grupos humanos se sucede desde las agrupaciones más primitivas. Este hecho se complica a medida que estos grupos evolucionan y se convierten en sociedades complejas estructuradas en torno a diversas instituciones, normas y prácticas que parecen ser inherentes a su existencia. Entender el concepto de poder es comprender cómo se construye y modifica la realidad, desde el punto en que un actor es capaz de interferir en las acciones de otro, hasta las acciones de un Estado a nivel internacional. A partir de ahí, este trabajo revisó los principales estudios sistemáticos sobre el poder, concentrándose en las formas relacionales y estructurales, identificando sus respectivas variables y posibilidades de uso. A continuación, amplió el debate a las teorías neorrealistas, neoliberales y constructivistas de las Relaciones Internacionales como forma de entender cómo se observa y define este acontecimiento por parte de cada teórico. A partir de esto, este trabajo puede identificar que el concepto de poder, por ser algo inherente a un grupo de seres humanos y/o a un espacio temporal o espacial, sigue siendo algo sumamente válido para los problemas contemporáneos, sirviendo como una excelente herramienta analítica para interpretar realidades y diseñar procesos. Este resultado también refuerza la importancia de que la persona que analiza sepa manejar los instrumentos de definición, tanto dentro de sus singularidades como en conjunto.

**Palabras clave:** poder, relaciones internacionales, teoría

*You are the victim of men who think they are right... Just as one day you and captain Yonoi believed absolutely that you were right. And the truth is of course that nobody is right...*

**Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (1983)**

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*Chapter I*  
**Introduction**

When questioned, the definition of power leads to the common belief of capacity, ability, and order — being capable of positively reaching any result wanted. However, it is still one of the vaguest expressions of human communication, being a symbol for something we were born already knowing its meaning without a clear definition. Whoever has power can get everything. Ancestors crowned the strongest in strength as the most powerful after fighting for resources such as land and food. Thousand years later, royal families are patronised as powerful with their armies, alliances with other kingdoms, and being praised for their reign. This process resulted in the formation of nation-states, complex structures formed by relations of power within different groups and considering different variables — such as the same history, culture, habits, traditions, language, and others.

Society has evolved to this exercise, and the discipline that studies all these relations of power is called 'Political Science.' The evolution of the relationships within these groups developed the relation among these nation-states, demanding another way of analysing these relations of power. From here, we have the discipline of International Relations (IR), which is one of its most important foundations and variables as a field of study and analysis. World systems of states and governments started to get more complex, and the studies to portray the new reality started to follow in theorising new paths to explain and understand reality. Nowadays, the analytical core of these relations is the contemporary states, governments and even private organisms with their influence, strong economy, international presence, and military. By understanding this reality, the studies of power gain emphasis and, from power, we have the term politics and its science to comprehend the phenomena and relations. This

term can be comprehended as the actions and decisions made in groups in which there are relations of power among the members.

Scholars of analysis on International Relations visualise power as a symbol representing something. Something which the scholars dwell on in the systematic study of power later presented in this body of work. Karl Deutsch (1982) writes that power works as a message, reminding us of social associations, thoughts, and sentiments. Then, the set of memories will be activated and will function as a symbol that will function as a conditioner on the behaviour of members of a social group. "Power is a symbol, [representing] the capacity of modifying [...] social behaviour" (Deutsch 1982, 57). Of course, such a thing would have a limitation between what is the symbol and what corresponds with reality. Power has become, hence, something to be sought, leading scholars to understand such a phenomenon of power as both a means and an end to human relations. Machiavelli was one of the most notable classics to address such a perspective in politics by addressing in 'The Prince' the principles of the good relationship between the figure channelling power and power as the substance of possession. From then on, power also came to be associated with material resources, such as money, war equipment, water, and primal resources, among others.

This statement leads to the importance of understanding the various concepts of power in the IR field. The discussion presented in this work does not cover all the theories on power in the discipline of International Relations, since the aim of this body of work is not that. The temporal cut is justified by the scope of this work, and considering that it is not productive to run through the same productions like the ones that will be analysed already did. The choice of each work was made based on its relevance within its respective theoretical field and its contribution to the discussion of the concept of power. This also reflects what this work will

not be. By doing two types of approaches, revisiting and reviewing<sup>1</sup>, this work will not finish mimicking a handbook on IR theory. This work aims to better understand the concept of power in and to the IR field and its application by analysing the most recent theories and authors from each one.

Therefore, chapter two will deal briefly with the systematic study of power, contextualising the relational and structural forms of power. The choice of four bodies of work for the section was based on the relevance and the interconnection among them due to the criteria of revisiting<sup>2</sup> these works, exposing a single current of thought. The analysis of relational and structural power is not comparative, presented only as of the most considered by IR theorists. Chapter three brings the main works on the neo-neo debate and Constructivism, chosen by their pioneerism or by their contribution to and consideration by the field; each of them will bring historical examples to the better comprehension of each. Chapter four will apply the concepts discussed and delimited to contemporary conjunctures in a way of analysing the usability of the general concept of power.

## *Chapter II*

### **The systematic study of power: from Robert Dahl to Susan Strange**

The presence of power in human relations, as presented, is known from our earlier registers of our existence. The older thinkers perceived power in different manners due to the flaws caused by its exercise in their societies. Plato and Hobbes discoursed the disorder of Greek and Italian societies respectively, and Rousseau and Marx wanted more justice amidst

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<sup>1</sup> The literature review is one of the most famous methods used in IR works, being capable of answering questions or serving as a way to explain more complex problems. One of the main works in the area of political sciences is Knopf's *Doing a Literature Review* (2005), which is the reference of the practice in this work. By revisiting, this work will apply the principle of the word itself and present the main ideas to the debate of each work selectioned.

<sup>2</sup> Idem. aforementioned.

injustice, for example (Strange 1988). From the development of the political discussion, relations of power have been analysed by major scholars, however, the systematic study of the concept of power and the power itself only started in the late 1950s, with Robert Dahl's 1957 seminal article, "The Concept of Power". The debate was engaged by political scientists, sociologies, and economics, among other scholars from the study of humanities.

Dahl's propositions were criticised and the following debate started the discussion towards power as a relational matter, mainly in the political sphere. John Harsanyi (1962), and Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz (1962) both complemented Dahl's perspectives on power, turning relational power — important to International Relations — into a structured concept. In the counterposition, Susan Strange (1988) is presented due to her contribution of structural power in International Political Economy as a complement to relational power. The authors were chosen due to the narrative created within them, presenting how power can be perceived by IR theories in the following chapter.

#### **a) Robert Dahl and the relational power**

The first notorious scholar of this innovative approach to the concept of power was Robert Dahl, well-known polyarchy theory. He starts signalling this lack of structuration of this field proposing a new way to visualise this process of power. First, he points out the fact that there are diverse ways of expression of power, and the one which interests the study of politics, therefore the relations of nations, is the relational one. He defines this relation as the "relative degree of power held by two or more persons" (Dahl 1957, 201).

From this perspective, Dahl proposes the statement of power in which social and political sciences understand it: *A* can make *B* do something to an extent *B* would not do

regularly (Dahl 1957). There are, however, considerations to using this principle as the definition of power itself. Power has different meanings, in different periods in human societies, cultures, and political structures. Dahl points out this as the possibility of power being a concept that could categorise many things. In extension, power must be conceptualised in the matters of the requirement of the research in which it would be used. Each conjuncture of the relation among different actors<sup>3</sup> demands a different belief of the power, and this is possible to shape the concept of power by working with the following variables.

The key role of these variables is to be the resource of power. Correcting applying the source of power required by the research in question, the concept of power would change to better fit the researcher's, therefore the analysis, necessities. Dahl (1957, 203) provides four key resources of power: *(i)* the source, domain, or base of the actor's power; *(ii)* the means or instruments used to exert power; *(iii)* the amount or extent of the actor's power; and *(iv)* the range, or scope of the actor's power, e.g. constitutional veto, executive actions, influence over a nation or a key decision-making group, charisma, charm, etc.

By means, it often involves threats and promises, being a mediating activity between *A* and *B* over *B* responses. For example, *A* wants *B* to take an economic decision by the promise of military cooperation, or the threat of an international veto, in the case of the United States and its embargoes around the globe. The scope is *B*'s response to *A*'s wishes and determines if it is the thing *A* wants to happen or not. The last one is the amount of power is the sum of the means and the scope. For example, in the previous example presented, *A* identifies that there are eight out of ten chances of *B* doing what *A* wants (80%). Therefore, the amount is the measurement of power.

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<sup>3</sup> Actors can be anything composed of human beings: from individuals to groups, offices, and governments, institutions, and nation-states.

There are specificities called properties of power relations, like the necessity of the actors having a sort of connection, or an opportunity to have one. The most important one is the fact that power must have a direction to be projected. It is the base of a relational study to have a relation; otherwise, it would result in statistical independence; therefore, no way to analyse the power relation following the concept presented. The intent is not the only thing to be considered by A in determining the direction wanted by the projection (Dahl 1957).

For example, during the Cold War, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union projected their power toward the underdeveloped and fragile nations of the global South to consolidate their role as global *hegemons* and the supremacy of their ideologies. In other terms, there were three actions needed: (i) creating a relationship between themselves and the targeted country, (ii) guaranteeing that the institutions were working as they wished; and (iii) projecting power. It is also possible to see this arrangement in the proxy wars, famous during this time. The Korean War is a remarkable example of the projection if considering the fact the country is, technically, still at war and split between liberal capitalism and dictatorial socialism.

Having advanced on the specificities and understanding of how the key resource of power works, Dahl (1957, 205-6) proposes a way of comparing power. He suggests the importance of defining exactly what is being more, equally, or less power following the request of a specific analysis. For comparison, there are another five factors that must be included in comparing powers: (i) various sources, (ii) different means of applications, (iii) different scopes, (iv) different numbers of comparable respondents, and (v) different probabilities<sup>4</sup>. The balances, however, happen only in the last three categories in which iii and iv are identical.

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<sup>4</sup> When interpreted, the conditions *iii* and *iv* are equal, corresponding to how *B* will react to *A*'s projection of power. The difference lies in the number of responses *B* have and if they are comparable among them or not.

For a better comprehension: *A* wants *B* to behave in a certain way about a topic of elevated risk for *B* but advantageous for *A*. *A* must have a reliable source of power, i.e. being a stakeholder of interest of *B*, and be ready to be humble with promises or Machiavellian with threats. However, an actor *C* can do a better proposal, i.e. instead of being a stakeholder, being a decision-maker on this topic of interest. Therefore, it is safe to say that *C* has more power over *B* than *A* comparing them. Dahl proposes that, if only one of these three variables differences, the one with a higher score, in the end, will be the most powerful. He also points out the danger of jeopardising the comparison with bias due to the free aspect of the concept of power as an analytical tool (Dahl 1957).

Once this entire process is made, power can be defined, visualised, and ranked, then compared in a way of defining what is to be more/less/equally powerful than another actor. There are considerations made according to other forms of measuring power, such as broader variables like the concept of negative power (in which the influence provokes the opposite of expected). Despite that, these concepts are not so applicable, even more so in the contemporary issues of high interest and facts inadequacy brought various scholars to criticise and propose other approaches to Dahl's attempt at the conceptualisation of power. As exposed before, this was the first attempt to systematise the study of power. This study will focus on two of them, published soon after, in 1961, by John Harsanyi, and in 1962, by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz. Both dialogues directly with Dahl's writings, and they are more relatable to our reality in the sense of defining power.

#### **b) John Harsanyi: costs and strengths of power**

First, John Harsanyi dialogues directly with the key resources of power, highlighting the necessity of not only caring about how *A* would act but also considering *B*'s perspective as well. By the original proposal, *A* is the one in charge of exerting power to modify *B*'s behaviour in the condition of *B*'s noncompliance. The author interprets Dahl's model as a "(...) great social power is an ability to influence many people (extension) in my respects (scope) and with a high probability (amount of power)" (Harsanyi 1962, 67), adding two new variables. First, it is the opportunity cost to *A* in trying to influence *B*'s behaviour, namely the costs of *A*'s power over *B*; and the opportunity costs to *B* in refusing to do what *A* wants them to do, in other terms, the strength of *A*'s power over *B*.

Thus, the new statement of power is put as "*A*'s power over *B* is greater the smaller the costs of *A*'s power and greater the strength of *A*'s power" (Harsanyi 1962, 68). It can be expressed either in physical units, monetary units, and utility units. From this, Harsanyi develops his theory around the concept of power, adding new interpretations to relational power from his concepts of costs and strength of power. First, the cost of power evinces whether *A* can or cannot get *B* to perform a certain action and how sure he can be, the probability, that *B* will act. The concept of power does not consider the cost of power to be inaccurate; unless the cost is exceedingly high, or even prohibitive, e.g. cost of living, an entire city. The author uses an example of a person with access to change the information of a decision-maker, alerting that, even if this person has great power, there are consequences such as unemployment and even criminal charges; therefore, an inflated cost.

Secondly, the strength of power is the comprehension of what difference it makes to *B* to act per *A*'s interests. For this approach, it is necessary to know if *A* is an ally or an enemy to *B*. This information will supply the opportunity costs of *B* doing or not certain actions toward *A*'s interests. Harsanyi (1962, 71) presents four main ways in which *A* can manipulate



the opportunity costs of *B*: (i) *A* may provide certain new advantages or disadvantages; (ii) *A* may arrange rewards or punishments; (iii) *A* may supply information, true or false, on already existing situations in order to open various alternative policies to *B*; and (iv) *A* may exert their authority directly over *B*, or use *B*'s personal affection for *A*.

Among these ways of manipulation, only the second one can act bilaterally, having an explicit or implicit bargain in the negotiation. For example, if *A* quite needs *B* to behave in a certain way, there is space to negotiate the rewards or to avoid the punishments. In this case, "(...) *B* can exert pressure on *A* by withholding his compliance, even though compliance would be much more profitable than noncompliance. He may also be able to exert pressure on *A* by making the costs of a conflict (including the costs of punishing *B* for noncompliance) [exceedingly] high to *A*" (Harsanyi 1962, 74). Commonly, in the traditional case of exerting power, the bargaining is unilateral, taking into consideration only *A*'s needs. Harsanyi called this second scenario the blackmailer's fallacy.

This leads to what was called the power exerted in a schedule sense, in which the stronger the incentives supplied are, the larger will be the number of specific actions and actors eager to perform it. While the scope, the amount, and the extension of their power are all functions of the strength of the power over other individuals, the strength of the power is itself a function of the costs of power this actor is prepared to bear (Harsanyi 1962, 73). Schedule power comprehends the terms of the functions/schedules connecting the other four variables (scope, amount, extension, and strength) with the cost of power. Speaking about power in a scheduled sense can be seen as a production function on how a person can transform different numbers of their resources (money, working time, political rights, popularity) into the social power of various dimensions (various strengths, scopes, amounts,

and extensions). The other sense of power is the point sense, in which the dimensions are dealt with separately and correlated among them equally.

The addition of Harsanyi's new key features in understanding the concept of power alongside those proposed by Dahl made the concept of relational power somewhat more complete and broad. Harsanyi successfully dialogues with Dahl's 'The Concept of Power' to improve his statement with important variables. Both costs and strength of power have a strong influence on the opportunity costs introduced by economic science, and they represent an important variable in understanding power as a fundamental factor of human existence and relationships. And more than understanding how power acts by the side of the one project, it also considers the costs of this projection and how this power will be received by the target.

It concludes, hence, that power is the cost of *A* to get *B* to do something *A* wants, succeeding when the costs of *B*'s noncompliance are higher than changing the behaviour. Therefore, the five dimensions of power are scope, amount, extension, cost, and strength.

### **c) Bachrach and Baratz: elitists vs. pluralists**

Briefly, the authors brought another perspective for this relational power perspective, noticing how the debates were evolving from the 1950s with the main writings; from Robert Dahl (for consideration, one of the main authors from pluralism). Their proposition divides two different approaches, from sociology with a highly centralised concept of power, hence, elitist; and political science with a diffuse perspective of power. Their thesis affirms that "there are two faces of power, neither of which the sociologists see and only one of which political scientists see" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 947).

The authors criticise three points of the sociological approach to power: *(i)* the definition of an ordered system of power in every human institution, defined by a mirror image of an organisation organogram; *(ii)* there is no change in these structures, therefore, no change in the exercise of power; *(iii)* the reputation is often misinterpreted as power. The pluralists, otherwise, consider not only the sources of power but its exercise too. They use a quote from Robert Dahl's theory to indicate that power also means participation in the decision-making process, and it is necessary to analyse the concrete actions and how the individuals in their relationship among them happened<sup>5</sup> (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). It is visible that the pluralists have a method to analyse the exercise of power following specific paths in an observable event. Both authors consider power as the "[exercise] when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices (...)" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 948).

Presenting these two groups, the authors point out the non-existence of a real understanding of what power is by the realists and incomplete by the pluralists. They exposed the non-consideration of the biased behaviour in political organisations, leading to the necessity of a criterion to classify important and unimportant issues in the political arena (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). They criticised Dahl's work on the concept of power, signalling he would not have a distinction between a key and a routine political decision. Therefore, both authors indicate the necessity of having the capability to distinguish the two faces of power: *(i)* the exercise of power on critical issues, as proposed by Dahl and recognised by political scientists; and *(ii)* the restrictive face of power, which involves the dynamic of nondecision-making. In other terms, there is the use of influence to prevent the discussion or conflicts from being brought. This strategy can be used to determine what is key and what is

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<sup>5</sup> See "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," Robert Dahl, 1958.

routine political decisions by analysing the discredit of suggestions not useful for the construction of power.

From now, we have power, in a relational perspective, as an equation which considers how the power is maintained (economic assets, military forces, political influence, etc.), the tools the power holder would use (promises, threats, etc.), the best plan to apply these tools, the probability of success, the number of individuals are being influenced, the costs of *A* doing this influence and of *B* is acting as expected by *A*. It provokes the possibility of involving in a mathematical model to measure power, and then, ranking and comparing it. And the ability to recognise the two faces of power (the exercise and the restrictiveness of power), provides the ability for the analyst to better understand this phenomenon, and how an actor can be qualified as powerful, or more/less powerful than other actors, among other variables.

#### **d) Strange's structural power: more than economics**

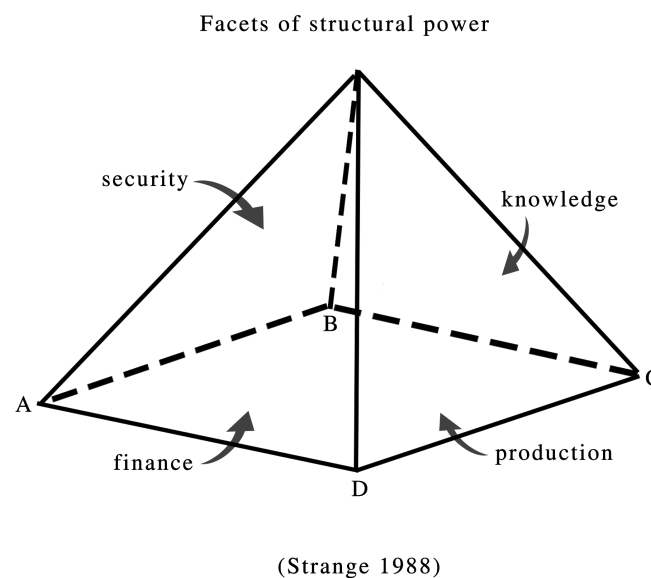
The British economist Susan Strange is well known for her theory of structural power. Even though the previous text reviews structural power as a jeopardising instrument in analysing power, Strange proposes a model of structural power for international economic relations in which various sources maintain this form of power. Although her theory is designed for economics, it can be well interpolated into International Relations theories as an analytical instrument. She started by presenting four different priorities a state will take security, wealth, order, and justice. The priority taken will determine the side of the balance between the alignment within the authority and the market the country will be, therefore, how they will govern (Strange 1988).

This domestic alignment reflects relations among nations. In considering the term “structural power,” we have the fine line of the type of actors of whom we are speaking. By “structural,” it considers organisations and institutions inside a country in which people work to guarantee every process will be done. This structure is well worked in Political Science and State Theory on Law, but, in an overview, the structure is the state and its organisations, and it is necessary to the states' function as a sovereign country; Max Weber called it “bureaucracy.” These structures can be public or private, going from ministries and legislative assemblies to juridical, financial, communication, and educational systems. It is important to highlight that only states can exercise structural power.

Therefore, Strange (1988) defines structural power as the power to arrange, shape, and reorganise the global structures of international politics. This relation is made among states and their institutions, enterprises, and other sectors of interest. This sort of power confers to the state the capability (the power itself) of defining how small, medium, and large political actions will be taken; these being key or routine actions. The state will be able to shape frameworks and relations among other states, cooperative relations, and people (Strange 1988, 25). In the end, “it is power that determines the relationship between authority and market” (Strange 1988, 23). Authority lies in whoever has power, and it is quite necessary to ask what the source of power is considering that distinct groups can get different sorts of power from diverse sources.

These sources will determine how the structural power works. First, there is the necessity to consider two types of how power can be executed: by political and economic means. A lot of interpretations would consider these two forms of relational power as sources of structural power; however, these two forms are correlated and work intrinsically and they can be held by individuals. Sources of structural power are not related among them, and they

only can be performed by states. Structural power can be presented as a pyramid in which no facet will be more important than the other. Each of them supports the other and helps the entire system. The sources are the same as the remote small group or the most interconnected and complex society. Strange (1988, 26) believes the states live in an anarchical order, as realists also believe.



*Figure 1. Facets of structural power.*

These four facets are security, knowledge, finance, and production. “Once these are understood, it can be shown that certain subjects of discussion in international politics, such as trade, aid, energy, international [transportation and others,] are actually secondary structures” (Strange 1988, 28). The security facet is the capability of offering protection against violence, there are, hence, bellicose armaments, the military, alliances, and so far. Knowledge is the capability of controlling communication channels, knowledge production, and belief — the well-known *soft power*. By finance, there is credit, and the more a country has a capability in the financing, the more the country will have power; it is important to

highlight those banking institutions themselves are not part of the financial facet, but the interconnections among them globally are. By production, it is the 'means of production,' as established by Karl Marx. The author cites his and Robert Cox's structure of production to demonstrate for how long these aspects are on societies.

The country that holds the structural power can affect the choices of other nations without the necessity of exercising direct pressure. Science Politics holds the effects of power to institutional limits, isolating atomised units. Economics does not consider the exogenic forces — minimising costs as the main beacon of nations. International Relations have a strong emphasis on relational power and in the 'high politics' — security, economics, whatsoever —, states are seen as homogeneous groups. The structural power needs to bear every vision together to better provide the right framework of actions. The international regimes<sup>6</sup> are examples of structural power in action. For example, the international regime of communication reflects the structural power of the United States in exercising a hegemon on Internet matters, Hollywood, and other forms of cultural influence.

While relational power is in focus due to the recent quantitative approach to International Relations, the structural power, alone, cannot be read alone. Individual, human beings shape states and make decisions in these structures of decision-making. The literature on political analysis, and decision-making, both alerts us to consider the irrationality of the actors. Susan Strange (1988) also highlights the number of irrational factors that makes it impossible to attribute such quality to social sciences. Other works also point out this factor, such as Hollis and Smith's 'Explaining and Understanding International Relations' (1990).

From here, having presented the main approach to the concept of power in the discipline of International Relations, this work will aim to analyse the main concepts of

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Strange cites Stephen Krasner (1983, 186) to explain international regimes: "Regimes can be defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations".

power in IR theories from the 1990s to the contemporary. The analysis will focus on Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism.

### *Chapter III*

## **Power and International Relations**

As already exposed, power has different perspectives depending on how the researcher is dealing with the concept. There is no difference with the earlier theoretic of International Relations, they dealt with power from a perspective of resources and the main goal of countries. The idea of relational power was not considered due to the mutual work of IR theories and Robert Dahl in the 1950s, the very same period as Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*, 1954. Beyond that, there is a debate on the concept of power among IR theories as a tool itself. Abraham Kaplan and Harold Lasswell (1979, 109) work with power as a "deference value [...] that can be described in terms of its dominance, scope, strength, and coerciveness". The variation is indiscernible when compared with the approach of Dahl (1957) and Harsanyi (1962) on the concept of power, which reconfirms the point that power happens eminently and naturally in different spaces and historical periods.

The major body of work on this theme is a homonym with this work, "Power and International Relations," written by David A. Baldwin (2016). The first chapter is dedicated to a literature review on the concept, highlighting the major debate — which differs from the one proposed by this work due to the focus on only two forms of expression of power: the relational and the structural one. In summary, in addition to what was already stated, "(...) power [is] a causal concept [and it] should be viewed as a relational [and multidimensional] concept rather than a property concept; and [...] the bases of power [are] many and varied,



with no permanent hierarchy among them” (Baldwin 2016, 3). The basis of this statement is the fact of the various concepts of power.

Exploring international politics matters more, Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (2005) propose a taxonomy of the concept of power. There are four conceptual types of power (compulsory, structural, institutional, and productive), and they correlate in the relational specificity (direct or diffuse) and the means of work (interaction of specific actors or social relations of a constitution). The authors also stress the importance of understanding that the relationship between power and international relations cannot be rigid so that it can adapt to social and systemic transformations (Barnett and Duvall 2005). The terms mirror the same proposed by Susan Strange in her definition of structural power (1988).

It is the first time that the discussion of power within the discipline of international relations has had so many contributions from different theories. With the existence of theories such as Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism, the debate about what power is enriched and the concept may correspond better to reality. These three main theories bring to the fore what was conjured up by the Cold War, and Constructivism, which is born out of the desire for change in the nuclear status quo, dealing with the many faces of power, from the military, economics, to the values, ideas, and symbols. Therefore, if we consider the quality of rupture that this moment in history exerts on these theoretical debates, it can be observed that the 3rd and 4th great debates prove to be fully capable of addressing the concept of power in the contemporary world.

From this, the main references of each theory state what these three theories understand as power, who possesses it and what it can become. For Neorealism, Kenneth Waltz (1979) and John Mearsheimer (2001) revolutionise Realism with new ideas and experiences from the development of the Cold War. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2012)

— first edition in 1977 — expanded liberal theory with the concept of interdependence along with the rise of international organisations (IOs). Then Nicolas Onuf (1989) and Alexander Wendt (1999) debate the idea of values and ideas on international politics, overcoming the idea of states and structural organisms as the centre of international relations.

This paper will discuss how each of these theorists contributed to the understanding of power through each of their respective theories. Historical conjunctures will be used as didactic tools for better understanding. Then, a contemporary conjectural analysis will be proposed to understand if the concept of the power structure in the work still has relevance to contemporary problems and how they can work to better interpret such phenomena.

#### **a) The neo-neo debate**

The neo-neo debate on IR theories presents a new perspective from the Realism and liberal theories on IR. The traditional, neoclassical Realism and the idealism are not any more capable to merge into their theories all the tools necessary to better visualise international processes among nations. The Cold War and the bipolar order are now the focus of international scholars and analysts, leading them to agree on the matter of fact as two opposite sides. The focus now is on debating certain reasons and functions of certain elements of the international system<sup>7</sup>. By now, both neorealists and neoliberalists believe in rational egoistic states led by self-interests (Hobson 2000).

It is important to state how this great debate on IR theories works and how they express power within their analysis of reality. First, it is important to highlight how both

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<sup>7</sup> By the “international system,” I retrieve the same footnote made to explain Krasner's concept of regimes. The international system is a concept used by realists by tradition. This work, although, will use this expression as the understanding of this international experience forged with the two World Wars, the Cold War, and the existence of IOs (the United Nations scope). The reason for this choice lies in the number of concepts presented, being better, therefore, to simplify to a better understanding for the one reading.

theoreticians perceive the anarchy within the international system. From this perspective, we can visualise their approach to the concept of power. Both neorealists and neoliberals believe states are coexisting in an anarchic system. However, both theories regard hegemony through different lenses.

Neorealists perceive anarchy as a world without a higher power threatening these states' hegemony, being "a structure of constraints to which no state is immune" (Hoffman 1987, 238). They are often called structuralists due to the high attributions they make to political and economic structures. Waltz's contributions<sup>8</sup> on the matter (1979) state that anarchy is an absence of this great power that obligates the state to seek power for self-protection, and at the pace states pursue power, a balance is created among them. The main principle and justification for action in anarchy is self-help (Waltz 1979, 88, 111). On the other hand, Mearsheimer (2001) justifies seeking power to avoid other countries to jeopardise their sovereignty, dialoguing with the great power politics and their necessity of having offensive military capabilities.

Their two perspectives state the main debate between the neorealist theoretic: offensive and defensive Realism. In seeking power, defensive states pursue it to protect their sovereignty from the interference of others. To retrieve the concept of power as proposed by Dahl (1957) and Harsanyi (1962): pursuing power would avoid interference in behaviour since there are many factors and resources to serve as a counterpoint, building strength to the power. Therefore, seeking power is the major goal of every state due to its necessity for its survival in the anarchic system. Having enough resources to attack your enemies, avoiding the rising of other great powers, or preventing others from attacking — as stated by defensive and offensive Realism theories respectively — is the main reason states seek power.

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<sup>8</sup> Waltz's anarchy discussion started in his 1954 book, "Man, the State and War".

By power, in the context presented, the common understanding comes first with the material elements, most represented in the belligerent power and the acquisition of military technology. This is the reason Realism is often associated with the military. However, it is important to highlight that other assets are extremely important to exert influence, i.e. economic, and financial resources, as well as a great scope of technologies from all sorts of areas. The same can be seen as Strange's structural power is analysed, since a powerful state would be able to act towards authority and market, as stated by her<sup>9</sup> (1988), with no resistance from others. Thus, the structural experience can be entirely perceived, expressing why neorealists are also called structuralists.

Neoliberals also share this perspective of structures, which gain a new name: institutions. This theory is also called institutional Neoliberalism due to its statement about international institutions and their role in the international system and order. Some authors also bring a notion of anarchy in their writings, however, the concept of anarchy, even though quite far from what is known and well stated by the neorealists. Andrew Linklater (1998) uses Wendt's constructive proposal of anarchy to represent his thoughts on the matter, for example. "Anarchy is what states made of it" (Wendt 1992), also being the name of the journal article.

The point is that anarchy for neoliberals is a circumstance that exists within States, thus an object of opportunity. Neoliberalism points out that what happens in an anarchical relation is cooperation since every country wants to 'survive' in the 'insecurity' of the 'anarchical system.' The quotation marks point out how neoliberals deal with these questions in their debate. It is important to highlight that they also believe security and self-preservation are the main substances of states, but, otherwise Neorealism, Neoliberalism believes that, in

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<sup>9</sup> As afore-mentioned, "(...) states, however, live in an anarchical world order" (Strange 1988, 26).

the absence of this authority above all states, they can cooperate to get better opportunities and achieve better results (Powell 1994).

How both debates deal with these conceptions of power, and anarchy, and so far, reflects directly on the perception of what could be real sources of power to them. From Economics, there is the idea of relative and absolute gains. In International Relations, neorealists are considered relative gainers due to their evaluation of the general scenario and their tendency to cooperate in order to balance power (Waltz 1979); however, the cooperation is jeopardised by the low quality of information, hence avoided (Mearsheimer 2001). This is better explained with the *zero-sum game* — in which the gain of *A* implies the loss of *B*. Meanwhile, neoliberals are considered absolute gainers due to their perception of mutual gain from cooperation; the main goal is not only the power but also economic and cultural impacts as well (Powell 1994). It is better visualised with the *non-zero-sum game*, where the gain of *A* does not imply the loss of *B*.

Cooperation exerts a great function in the neo-neo debate. Above-mentioned, neorealists are willing to cooperate, but the anarchical system impeding information on the desires and behaviour of other states alongside the existence of this survival determination provokes the willingness to cooperate. However, neoliberals, on the other hand, have a distinct perspective of cooperation, which leads to the main contribution to the theory: Keohane and Nye's 'Power and Interdependence', first released in 1979. This book is well known for its debate about complex interdependence and reflections on globalisation in the international system.

Complex interdependence is a self-explanatory concept looking from a contemporary perspective. Globalisation has reached its maximum and now every country is part of the web in which the concept of societies we know from the West to the East are interconnected and

interdependent. In a namesake journal article, previewing the book, Keohane and Nye (1973) affirm that the existence of complex webs interconnecting various actors — namely, states, international organisations, private actors, enterprises, banks, and financial institutions — could undermine the power of states and elevate the influence of international non-state actors. By the time, both authors analysed the economic interdependence; however, nowadays it is possible to see how everything is interconnected due to our high dependence on the Internet.

There are three characteristics that complex interdependence express: *(i)* the use of numerous means of action between actors; *(ii)* the absence of a hierarchy on issues and agendas, and *(iii)* the main objective is to minimise the military force and the coercive power in international relations (Keohane and Nye 2012). From this, there are various theories of the construction of peace and the importance of international organisations (IOs) in this process. The most famous is the Democratic Peace Theory (Russett 1993), which determines that peace and, therefore, collective security is only possible when democracy happens in most countries at the same time because democratic states are not willing to enter into conflict.

Neoliberalism was born during the Cold War and the construction of the United Nations and the popularisation of treaties and agreements between nations to seek mutual objectives and desires under the juridical protection of the organisation created after World War II. And such agreements could not happen when the sense of limitations and poor-quality information prevailed as it could be if such a 'Neorealism space of cooperation' existed. Power, for neoliberals, indeed, is the same as it is for neorealists — belligerent equipment, economic assets, and technologies, among others. However, some aspects of relational power are not as hard as they would be in Neorealism manners. As a simple example, meanwhile, the cost of power (Harsanyi 1962) is an important variable for neorealists due to its implicit

loss, the cost of power to neoliberals could be becoming an ally instead of a hindrance, for example.

As a debate developed about having structures as something important, Strange's structural power (1988), as a theory developed based on Economics, has a better dialogue with Neoliberalism. Considering everything presented and discussed, it is possible to infer that power can be more than just resources of influence. Structural power is not only about having power but setting agendas with no use of coercive power (Strange 1988). Therefore, once a state controls both four facets of power — financial, production, security, and knowledge —, power would come naturally as a result.

The best example of this approach to gaining power is the United States. Since the change in the country's tradition of foreign policy and its history with the League of Nations fiasco, the U.S. could not only engage in the creation of the United Nations but also impose itself on the institutions (Pecequilo 2003). Later, when the Cold War started and the promotion of the American Way of life, the path was clearer, assuring a better condition in the ideological battle than it was for the Soviet Union. Alone, the U.S. could manage to dominate in the second half of the 20th century the four facets of power. The country had a high production chain, the best economy and the dollar standard, domain over security and knowledge due to the Cold War and the ideological matter of the situation. A standard of structural great power.

On the neorealist model, the rise of China is one of the best examples, as analysed by Mearsheimer (2021) himself. In his analysis, the neorealist reminds the situation post-Soviet Union and the Cold War: the U.S. were considered the hegemon after getting to the position of the only great power in the entire world. The domestic administration has nothing to worry about, even more with China, classified as a weak and impoverished state. However,

Mearsheimer narrated what indeed happened to present current China: the world's industry, one of the biggest economies worldwide, and the biggest threat to the U.S. role in the international system. The author also diagnoses following what Realism would predict: they classify China's ambition as a threat and surveillance is what they will do. The only outcome possible is competition and conflict (Mearsheimer 2021)<sup>10</sup>. The environment for another Cold War exists.

China now has the power over the facet of production, after the U.S. industrial collapse and the 2008 crisis — an episode which also represents the major impact non-state actors have due to the connection and the financial system interdependence. On Security, the country is not close to what the U.S. are nowadays, but they have nuclear arms. Knowledge is ambiguous since the U.S. and Europe still detain the main schools and researchers due to the historical construction of Western knowledge. The same happens with the financial system, since it is not as stable as the one from the U.S., even more, if we consider the dollar standard. In the end, China has a long path to go, however, since the Cold War, the closest since the Soviet Union. And, since the structural power is not on China's side, it could be expected to see more relational power instead — already noticed in the Chinese cultural and cinematography market, and with their industries and products. It is important to highlight that the cost of power over the state that manufactures the number of goods China produces tends to get higher.

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<sup>10</sup> “China is acting exactly as realism would predict. Who can blame Chinese leaders for seeking to dominate Asia and become the most powerful state on the planet? [...] not the United States, which pursued a similar agenda, rising to become a hegemon in its region and eventually the most secure and influential country in the world. [...] The United States is also acting just as realist logic would predict. [...] It sees China's ambitions as a direct threat and is determined to check the country's continued rise. The inescapable outcome is competition and conflict. Such is the tragedy of great-power politics” (Mearsheimer 2021).



## b) Constructivism

There are many points of rupture of IR theories. The principal at the debate division between the theories and the structural and post-structural theories. Once the third debate on IR theories is stated as the neo-neo debate<sup>11</sup>, the fourth debate had Abraham Kaplan and Harold Lasswell (1979, 109) work with power as a “deference what value [...] that can be described in terms of its dominance, scope, strength, and coerciveness”. ppens between the positivists and the post-positivism, which is the other main point of rupture on the subject. The fourth debate and the point of rupture between positivists and post-positivists raised the concern about the epistemology and ontology of the discipline and is labelled as a debate between rationalism vs. reflectionism (Keohane 1988). Rationalists are those ontologically committed to the theories of rational choice. The reflectionists are those who emphasise, “the importance of the ‘intersubjective meanings’ of international institutional activity. [...] In their view, understanding how people think about institutional norms and rules, and the discourse they engage in is as important in evaluating the significance of these norms as measuring the [behaviour] that changes in response to their invocation” (Keohane 1988, 381).

One of the theories that emerged during this period was Constructivism. As the aforementioned theories have, the conventional Constructivism walks on the middle ground between the two perspectives by adopting a positivist approach, occupying a prominent place in IR theories. Critical Constructivism questions the individualist ontology of rationalists, emphasising a social ontology of analysing international relations (Fierke 2013). But both were responsible for this innovative approach in which the structure of the states is no longer so important for analysis as in the neo-neo debate. There is no instinct for survival anymore,

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<sup>11</sup> Or the second debate for those who do not consider the inter-paradigm (traditionalism vs. scientism) a great debate.

and now everything is based on the principle of social construction. Concepts, sentiments, actions, norms, traditions, and everything understood as social facts, are human-made creations and are influenced by norms, values, and subjective experiences (Onuf 1989).

Power gains another perspective as a social construction, and not something expressed on material resources, the state's reputation, and influence. Anarchy is different from what it was to neorealists and neoliberals as if it is a thing to the constructivists. Aforementioned, Wendt (1992) states that "anarchy is what states make of it", as it is a thing created based on experiences and inspired by certain types of experiences by different historical processes of its authors. Nicholas Onuf, one of the main constructivists theoretical, do not even agree that anarchy is the "central and defining feature of international relations" (1989, 14), and that "international relations was never a matter of anarchy" (1989, 163).

Still, on Onuf's thoughts on the matter, he dialogues with liberalism and philosophic political authors and thoughts to comprehend better what, in his idea, is an emptied concept. He attributes this emptiness of anarchy to the liberalism and rise of the capitalist state. From Machiavel to Max Weber, philosophers could see the existence of political society and its influence on policymaking in general. However, the prevalence of liberalism as a notion of modernity and its notions of economics and law are menacing the perception of political society and its rules, normative matters and asymmetric relations (Onuf 1989).

Since anarchy is not so important to the constructivists as it is for neorealists and neoliberals knowing the reason for such disinterest, power has various means to express, and states have other ways to pursue it. Power is now registered by normative instruments, such as the language itself. Onuf (1989) exposed those institutions themselves are seen as an expression of power in their functions and actions, however, "their ruleness, on which any normativity hinges, begins in speech [...] institutions are no more than the (temporary) effects

of speech act agreements, and they are as fragile as the decision, always capable of being revoked” (85). Their existence, therefore, their usage as a source of power, is difficult to ignore but can be abruptly jeopardised by the simple act of not believing or reconsidering the first word of creation.

On the same train of thought, there is Alexander Wendt (1999), which states power is the constituted product of ideas. The author introduces the label of materialists<sup>12</sup> which attributes to power what Onuf called brutal facts. The author notices how the classic approach of the principal IR debates tends to restrain all variables of analysis on material resources. Wendt (1999) thought of Constructivism as a ‘structural idealism’ since his variables could merge the main points of the whole structural debate, adding ideas to the whole equation. In previous exercises, I already worked with this concept, and it has been working well in analysing high political issues since the personality behind the decision-making process has an important rule.

Ideas<sup>13</sup> prove themselves as a product which is the main resource of our reality. Even theories are different ideas dialoguing together to build the (lack of) perception of reality a certain group of people would have. Power as a concept is a notable example to visualise how it is possible since the discussion until now stated other abstract concepts. To Wendt (1999, 97), power is constituted by ideas and cultural contexts, as presented in the introduction of this work. Power has different meanings and synonyms, and only by analysing the main Western languages, it be seen. Power is not a verb in English, but it is in languages like Portuguese and Spanish — *eu posso* or *nosotros podemos*. In French, there are *pouvoir* and *puissance*, in which the verb can function as a noun and so forth, as well as in Italian *poter*

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander Wendt takes care in labelling such a group as ‘materialists’ due to the importance of the term for the Marxist theory, highlighting this in the book (Wendt 1999, 94).

<sup>13</sup> Considering the Onuf’s philosophical usage on philosophers in his argument, it is comprehensible to highlight that ‘ideas’ are considered the product of thought in the discipline of Philosophy, being one of the main vectors of Cartesian philosophy — Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum*.

and *potere*. Dahl (1957) highlighted this aspect when he proposed the systematic study of power since the concept exists in many cultures in various times and places but meant the same thing somehow.

Now, before correlating the two authors with the aforementioned power, it is important to visualise how they work together as constructivists. As expected for a book released ten years after the one considered the force motrice of IR Constructivism theory, Alexander Wendt dialogues well with Nicholas Onuf's work. Both the ideas of normative instruments and ideas are key concepts for understanding how power is expressed in international relations. Since the normative aspect of our world and how things are created by these normative instruments, the power now is not only a simple concept but an abstract tool which could be used by every person capable of. Harsanyi (1962) exemplifies it with an example of a secretary that has the power of changing information and interfering in the decision-making process of an important organisation. This person could be approached by any other actor and convinced to act dirt, or she could just sell the information. The reality would be changed by the change of a person's idea.

Ideas also reveal the non-decision-making aspect of the process of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962), knowing that every action and no action has its costs, as Harsanyi (1962) himself called the 'costs of power'. But it helps the visualisation of how the minimum influence of a decision could finish in gaining or the loss of a great amount of power. Ideas are an expression of power since everything had to be an idea before turning into reality — from vaccines to nuclear weapons, both with such potential of changing reality. Other notable examples are Woodrow Wilson's idealism and the League of Nations, paving the way for the United Nations after World War II. There is no anarchy or greater menace, only thoughts and ideas of what things are or could be from different perceptions, values, and experiences.

Knowledge itself is based on ideas that are influenced by personal or even greater beliefs, being possible to comprehend ideas as one of the variables of structural power, as Wendt (1999) himself called Constructivism a 'structural idealism'. Afore-mentioned, we have Susan Strange's structural power (1988) and the four facets of power: production, security, financial and knowledge. On the last one, ideas could fit in, since knowledge comprehends the whole belief system of a society, going from media, press, and scholars, to religion and culture. However, ideas can not only be simpler than knowledge itself — as a product of interpretations and a rigorous scientific method —, but also be more complex due to the fact of their capacity for creation. To a better comprehension of the matter of explaining and understanding international relations, ideas could be added to Strange's structural equation to provide a better analytic tool.

Power to constructivists is expressed by Dahl's principles on the concept of power. Since the whole concept of normative instruments and ideas, they can operate as sources and means of power. An example well used by realists in general that can be applied to this scope is the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (Stern 2012). The sources of President John F. Kennedy's power were not only his position as the president, but also the whole context of the Cold War, the U.S. belligerent status, and even the possibility of creating such a group as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOMM). This group had an important role and power in its hands to decide the best alternative to avoid the mass assured destruction<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Commonly cited by realists and well-known as M.A.D.

based on extrapolation of ideas and language<sup>15</sup> — since language itself was something the analysed not only in the Soviet communiqués but also in bigger communications to the world.

In conclusion, power in Constructivism loses its material aspect and gains the realm of something abstract, which Dahl (1957) dialogues too. Political societies and their elements are comprehended to be social facts since they require human interference with the normative instruments, such as the language itself — since the language is the tool used to translate reality and to state common beliefs and executions, i.e. international organisations are a product of speech and an agreement that requires a mutual faith. Ideas express a key role in this matter, since, from a philosophical manner, they are the result of thought and, hence, the primal fuel in creating reality.

### **c) Notes on poststructural and critical IR theories**

The objective of this work was accomplished with the discussion of power in Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism. However, it is important to highlight some aspects of power in other theories not so mainstream as those discussed. As an example, these theories discuss abstract elements and are sometimes detached from historical contexts and social realities. Unfortunately, these theories do not have a presence in the discipline due to their debate has been happening on the margin of the U.S./European debate. The highlight of

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<sup>15</sup> As it is not the main objective of this work to deepen the cases chosen to help the visualisation of any applied theory: the 1962 Cuban Missiles Crisis was one of the main episodes of the Cold War and the closest humanity got to see a nuclear war happen. The U.S. intelligence located missiles in Cuba pointed to the U.S. territory and based on these pictures only, they were classified as nuclear missiles. The whole episode of dealing with such menace during the United States midterms elections started in secret, gaining attention after the United Nations Organisation of American States – OAS reunion when the U.S. made the formal denouncement. The whole solution was made in secret with opaque information and extrapolated ideas — in other words, with assumptions based on their perception of Soviet behaviour and decision-making. The language analysis was also a tool to discover the Soviet figure they were dealing with too. The case is highly used to explain some securitisation issues.

the discussion of power can be Marxism, the Feminist Theory and Colonialism since the roles of those expressing power are well delimited in the theory discussion.

Marxism is well-known among them all since power is linked with the domain of the means of production — therefore, the bourgeoisie and those ruling the capitalist states. Marxism is not related to Karl Marx's writings themselves but their interpretations and the theories of international hegemony and capitalism. This same approach is made in the colonial approach of International Relations, where the dominant relations between the core, namely empires, and the periphery are analysed. Immanuel Wallerstein and his 'world-system' analysis (2004) along with Stephen Borgatti and Martin Everett's (2000) models of core and periphery structures are the main dialogues on the debate that provides excellent tools to understand the secular historic process and its contemporary consequences. One of the main names within Marxist scholars, Vladimir Lenin, the pivot of the 1917 Russian Revolution, stated that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism as a system (Lenin 1917).

The Feminist Theory highlights another asymmetric relation in societies: the inequality of gender since the formulation of Western society, in general, happened with men as a protagonist. One of the main approaches of gender studies in International Relations is related to the role of women in decision-making processes and in History itself. Cinthia Enloe (2014), one of the main theoretical of Feminism on International Relations, asked in her main writing, 'where were the women in international politics, as an inquiry of how the international political system could rule by men and, most of the time, for men only. She dialogues with themes such as securitisation, tourism and even colonialism through the lens of gender and how gender itself is a tool to exert power — in this case, men over women based on the social factors and roles established historically.

In summary, it is important to understand that the concept of power, its pursuit, and its expression overcomes the classical and mainstream debates of politics and the International Relations discipline. Power can work as a sentiment of oppression of a towards b based on any variable of dominance constituted by historic events, social and brutal factors, political and economic structures, and their respective ramifications.

#### *Chapter IV*

### **The usage of 'power' as a tool to analyse contemporary issues**

Certain *problématiques* presented until this point is not overtaken by contemporary states and governments. As presented, power and its expression are quite often linked to the military power and the capacity states have for protection and destruction, leading to security being the main concern of states. The concept of power, as presented, is extremely broad and extremely theoretical in its executability. The exercise of power is a natural activity among human beings, and, as presented in the introduction of this paper, has been present since the beginning of organised human groups. It will not be new interpretations and new agents that will change this aspect of power relations.

It is important to visualise whether the systematic study of power is still relevant. According to Dahl (1957) and Harsanyi (1962), power is an event that takes place through a series of key factors. These factors range from the means of exercising power to the cost of that power for those executing it and for those who allow themselves to be influenced or not. However, it is important to highlight cases in which these power factors are not enough to serve as mechanisms of analysis for the exercise of power, making their interpretation riddled and opaque. Still, on the question of executability of analysis, it is important to mention the peculiarity of Susan Strange's theory of structural power, since her theory is broadened to



encompass points that are not explicitly addressed. For example, control of the energy matrix, which is classified by her as an issue secondary to the facets of structural power, but which exercises a function of interdependence with the production facet (Strange 1988). For better visualisation, table 1 will show the resonance among the different theories and concepts cited in this body of work.

<b>Table 1. Theories on the concept of power</b>					
<b>What is power?</b>					
Possibility, ability, capability, a way to act. In politics, the concept is a variable, a value that can describe dominance, scope, strength, and coerciveness (Kaplan and Lasswell 1979). Power is something abstract, and cannot be something rigid due to the change in international relations and the necessity of different variations to better understand reality (Dahl 1957; Barnett and Duvall 2005).					
<b>Relational power</b>					
<u>Dahl (1957)</u> : <i>a</i> can make <i>b</i> to do something <i>b</i> would not do regularly from strong sources and means and a great extent and range of power					
<u>Harsanyi (1962)</u> : there is the <i>cost of power</i> of <i>a</i> inducing <i>b</i> doing something and the <i>strength of power</i> on <i>b</i> on doing what <i>a</i> wants					
<b>Structural power</b>					
<u>Strange (1988)</u> : it relies on the structures that form societies and other systems that established the contemporary world — there are four sources of structural power: production, finances, security, and knowledge					
Structural power are restricted to states, and it is accomplished when the agenda can be set without any interference					
<b>International Relations theories on power</b>					
<b>Rationalists</b>			<b>Reflectionists</b>		
Those theories based on the rational choice, having the states (and its structures) as the key actors of international politics			Subjective and interconnected meanings. Social events and phenomena.		
NEO-NEO DEBATE			CONSTRUCTIVISM		
<i>Neorealism</i>	<i>Neoliberalism</i>	<i>Structural Constructivism</i>	<i>Critical Constructivism</i>		
<b>Anarchy</b>					
<u>Neorealists (Waltz 1979)</u> : absence of a major power above all states; the absence of power that undermines states' hegemony — countries' seek for power creates a balance			<u>Onuf (1989)</u> : international politics beyond the anarchy "problématique"		
<u>Neoliberals &amp; Constructivists (Linklater 1998; Wendt 1992)</u> : "anarchy is what states made of it"					
<b>Offensive</b>	<b>Defensive</b>	<i>a.k.a</i> <b>Institutional Neoliberalism</b> <u>Structures = institutions</u>	<i>Wendt's</i> <b>Structural Idealism</b>	<i>Onuf (1989)</i>  It does not accomplish importance to the anarchy.  Belief and the language	
<u>Relative gains</u> : zero-sum game	<u>Absolute gains</u> : non-zero-sum game				
<i>Mearsheimer (2001)</i>  The quest for offensive power is fueled by the	<i>Waltz (1979)</i>  The quest for power comes from the need to	Survival is important, but the absence of a great power over states becomes an opportunity to make <u>cooperation</u> more successful	<i>Wendt (1999)</i>  Power is a product of ideas and cultural contexts. And it		

<p>need for defence against external attacks and to generate fear of possible retaliation. This prevents the rise of other great powers and undermines future threats to the sovereignty</p>	<p>protect the sovereignty and to prevent interference from other states - it becomes a necessary element for existence and survival in the international system.</p>	<p><i>Keohane &amp; Nye (1977)</i>  <u>Complex interdependence:</u>  1. Various means of action between actors (institutions, economic, political, cultural relations etc.);  2. The end of hierarchy between states, leading to  3. The decreasing use of military forces and coercive power in international relations</p>	<p>has different meanings around the world — as in English, ‘power’ is not a verb as in Portuguese.   Structural idealism comes from the position of Alexander Wendt’s theory on both narratives of structural and constructivism matter.</p>	<p>itself is now micro symbols of this macro symbol called ‘power’. Structures exist due to the common belief in their existence and their legal (normative) regulations. Then, ‘power’ is and comes from something registered by normative instruments.</p>
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In the energy sector, it is observable that the issue of influence ends up becoming something separate in the decision-making processes in the area since energy is a vital element for the existence of humankind and a primordial factor for production. Currently, we can observe the excessive pressure from sectors of society for the sustainability of energy means that the main energy matrix is fossil fuels with high pollution qualities. However, it is still possible to observe the great presence of the so-called high politics in the decision-making process, since any agenda outside the traditional axis of politics, security and economy is considered a non-priority. Power, as presented, has shown itself as an objective of the entities that hold it as a purpose of control and guarantees before imminent destruction. However, it is not possible to work with such concepts in realities where profit overrides the idea of existence, as revealed in the case of research paid for by large fuel companies in favour of a narrative that promotes the use of fuels<sup>16</sup>. In another perspective, the idea of survival can mean the maximisation of profits, and the financial power of these companies in persuading research, controlling public opinion and governmental actions are

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<sup>16</sup> In 2020 and 2021, the English *The Guardian* reported that oil industries have been controlling the climate change debate by financing research and reports a try of rebranding themselves (Holden 2020). It is reported that, after years of this practice, these companies are facing an “unprecedented wave of lawsuits” as a consequence of the decades and permanent devastation provoked by fossil fuels on the environment and climate (McGreal 2021).

direct consequences of the exercise of power these companies possess — even if it is to the detriment of others without a direct relation of between a and b.

Still, on the environmental issue, narrative control is extremely important. The environmental agenda is influenced by speeches and actions in international forums, whether through the Conference of the Parties (COPs) or through protests and activist speeches that have gone viral on the Internet — as in the case of Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future. Environmental discourses work as a normative tool for the construction of reality and culminate in international treaties that pressure nations around the world to make their processes sustainable. However, the conflict of ideas ends up making this means of power ineffective for the advocates of the agenda — whether at the level of activism or even state agents. The main opposition to the environmental discourse is the development discourse. There is no proper connection between development and sustainability to the decision-makers, making the green alternative something that would hinder the much-desired development. The historical factor of domination by financial and security means by the global north states does not cooperate, so the power that environmental groups hold in their spaces of speech and decision-making is not effective.

Information technology also ends up overriding the discussion of power — mainly as a result of the rapid evolution of the information medium. The neorealists have the low quality of information about the reality of other actors as a factor for low adherence to cooperation, and with the Internet and social networks, this transformation of information happens organically and often on purpose. Disinformation has gained a key role in political campaigning in the last decade, used by figures aligned to ultra-right nationalist agendas. Misinformation was one of the main factors responsible for this rise, especially after the migration experience after the Arab Spring in 2011 and the wave of refugees that followed to

Europe, leading to the mixing of cultures and social perceptions (Zanuni, Caur and Costa 2021).

The role of technology also intersects with security issues in the Internet age. Espionage has become an easier threat, as has data theft and attacks on information systems that can seriously damage countries and institutions. One of the key foreign policy episodes of the Trump administration has been the allegations of espionage made against Chinese technology giant Huawei. The massive rejection of 5G technology emerged from this episode, which was an important milestone for the anti-China narrative created in the West. In this episode, the structural power that the United States possesses served them as an excellent reverberating apparatus for swift action, and quickly this political indigestion became a commercialised war. From this, China was seen as a direct competitor to the position of hegemon, leading to the United States needing to act to impede Chinese expansion (Mearsheimer 2021).

The aspects of the discussion of power and technology are not limited only to the issue of information and the Internet. Currently, there is considerable debate about the existence of cryptocurrencies and their high value on the financial market. There is no clear regulation on an international level, leading countries to direct regulatory measures without a basis or collective action for international regulation. The popularisation of digital currencies ended up making the debate about the total digitalisation of the financial system surface, considering that the globalised world is quite dependent on credit cards and financial transactions — countries like Brazil, whose banking system is extremely digitised make this dependence on digital and autonomy from physical money even more evident. Thus, the absence of state action makes the flow of the exercise of power by holders of the

cryptocurrency system opaque, naturalising the process of undermining the power of states as proposed by Keohane and Nye (1973).

The points raised on poststructural and critical theories of International Relations also offer a great contribution to the analysis of the effectiveness of the current conceptualisation of power and the applicability and effectiveness in the analysis of contemporary problems. The moment we present the climate issue, being the only example of the use of normative instruments as means of power, we see several issues beyond the constructivist theory, evoked to explain how power within the theory can explain this problem. We can see the power relations caused by colonial issues since most of the countries considered to be developed today have invaded and exploited other countries in the past. There is a great discrepancy in the representation of gender, race and age, considering that the decision-making profile on global issues is concentrated in European countries and the United States. This discrepancy also shows the impossibility of the power process, according to the theorists presented, happening to any group that gains political power in some way. The Thunberg case also denounces the low involvement of youth in international politics and as a driving force within the discipline of International Relations itself.

## *Chapter V* **Conclusion**

Power appears as an abstract event that somehow brings the idea of capacity, influence, and possibility with it, even if it does not mean exactly that. From Robert Dahl (1957), we have that power is the ability that A has over B to influence B to do something that he would not do under natural conditions. To identify this power, one needs to ascertain the source of that power, its instruments and means, its extent and quantity, and also the scope of

that power. John Harsanyi (1962) offers two new variables for analysing power: cost and force. It is also necessary to understand what the opportunity cost is for A in influencing B, as well as B's opportunity cost of not yielding to A's pressure.

The two faces of power by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962) present two important variables to understand the ability of different actors to express power. On the one hand, we have the ability to exercise power in situations of pressure, that is, a decision-making process that requires accurate decision-making with opaque and poor-quality information. On the other hand, we have the restrictive face of power and the issue of not making decisions as a possibility for the exercise of power — that is, the non-action that ends up becoming an actor. Finally, Susan Strange (1988) proposes a discussion beyond the direct relationship between actor A and actor B. Structural power is the inherent power of an actor to alter agendas and decision-making without the use of direct influence. Four facets make up structural power and must be mastered by the country that aims for such power: the production, financial, security, and knowledge facets. This kind of power can only be exercised by states.

From the interpolation with International Relations Theories, we see that power can go far beyond what is expected from countries and political leaders considered powerful. Neorealists are based on the need for survival and the threat to the sovereignty of states, leading to the quest for power being motivated by the need for survival. Neoliberals believe that the quest for power occurs to create better conditions for cooperation since these theoretic power gains occur in an absolute way — as opposed to the neorealists' relative way. Constructivists, on the other hand, are more detached from the structural concept, taking the concept of power to social construction and establishing it as a social fact that is sought to

achieve certain purposes. The idea is also introduced as a major source of power, aligning itself with Susan Strange's structural proposal.

So far, we see that the systematic debate about the concept of power is well consolidated. The topic of applicability of these concepts in contemporary conjunctures shows that the way power is discussed is effective to understand, for example, how certain forms of decision-making are made in the course of contemporary history. However, when considering the non-exact nature of applied social sciences, discernment is required from the analyst who uses these analytical tools to interpret reality — as also proposed by Dahl (1957) and highlighted by Barnett and Duvall (2005). The need to keep the concept of power as a fluid concept is justified by the uncertainty of our reality. Several works use numbers as a way to obtain a formula that can measure power so as to use such a number for better decision-making. However, to reduce power and its infinitude of variables and conditions is to block the potential for analysis and interpretation of a concept that fluctuates between dominance, scope, strength and coerciveness (Kaplan and Lasswell 1979).

Thus, the conclusion is that the concept of power functions well with its qualitative quality. It provides a great catalogue of tools capable of promoting comparison, identification of the proof of pursuing power and understanding it in reality. This aspect is reflected directly in the heterogeneity of each theory on power, because even though Dahl (1957) and Harsanyi (1962) dialogue directly, structural power is left behind since its application is limited to the actions of states (Strange 1988). The need for collective discussion of theories, rather than competition, is always considered.

Instead of realising that the exercise of two or more forms of power relations is unfeasible, a good analysis becomes one capable of visualising the same problem from different points of view and, only then, combining results in order to propose a better

interpretation of reality. Afore-mentioned several times during this work, power is something natural to the existence of social and organised groups of human beings, and it has intrinsic meaning to social beings. In this way, rescuing the study of power within the study of politics and international relations becomes an alternative to simplifying the way the discipline presents its interpretations of reality — as a way of not deeply biasing such perspectives.



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**Table 1. Theories on the concept of power**

<b>What is power?</b>				
<p>Possibility, ability, capability, a way to act. In politics, the concept is a variable, a value that can describe dominance, scope, strength, and coerciveness (Kaplan and Lasswell 1979). Power is something abstract, and cannot be something rigid due to the change in international relations and the necessity of different variations to better understand reality (Dahl 1957; Barnett and Duvall 2005).</p>				
<b>Relational power</b>				
<p><u>Dahl (1957)</u>: <i>a</i> can make <i>b</i> to do something <i>b</i> would not do regularly from strong sources and means and a great extent and rage of power  <u>Harsanyi (1962)</u>: there is the <i>cost of power</i> of <i>a</i> inducing <i>b</i> doing something and the <i>strength of power</i> on <i>b</i> on doing what <i>a</i> wants</p>				
<b>Structural power</b>				
<p><u>Strange (1988)</u>: it relies on the structures that form societies and other systems that established the contemporary world — there are four sources of structural power: production, finances, security, and knowledge                  Structural power are restricted to states, and it is accomplished when the agenda can be set without any interference</p>				
<b>International Relations theories on power</b>				
<b>Rationalists</b>			<b>Reflectionists</b>	
<p>Those theories based on the rational choice, having the states (and its structures) as the key actors of international politics</p>			<p>Subjective and interconnected meanings. Social events and phenomena.</p>	
<b>NEO-NEO DEBATE</b>			<b>CONSTRUCTIVISM</b>	
<i>Neorealism</i>		<i>Neoliberalism</i>	<i>Structural Constructivism</i>	<i>Critical Constructivism</i>
<b>Anarchy</b>				
<p><u>Neorealists (Waltz 1979)</u>: absence of a major power above all states; the absence of power that undermines states' hegemony — countries' seek for power creates a balance  <u>Neoliberals &amp; Constructivists (Linklater 1998; Wendt 1992)</u>: "anarchy is what states made of it"</p>				<p><u>Onuf (1989)</u>: international politics beyond the anarchy "problématique"</p>
<b>Offensive</b>	<b>Defensive</b>	<i>a.k.a</i> <b>Institutional Neoliberalism</b> <u>Structures = institutions</u>	<b>Wendt's Structural Idealism</b>	
<u>Relative gains:</u> zero-sum game	<u>Absolute gains:</u> non-zero-sum game			<i>Onuf (1989)</i>
<p><i>Mearsheimer (2001)</i></p> <p>The quest for offensive power is fueled by the need for defence against external attacks and to generate fear of possible retaliation. This prevents the rise of other great powers and undermines future threats to the sovereignty</p>	<p><i>Waltz (1979)</i></p> <p>The quest for power comes from the need to protect the sovereignty and to prevent interference from other states - it becomes a necessary element for existence and survival in the international system.</p>	<p>Survival is important, but the absence of a great power over states becomes an opportunity to make <u>cooperation</u> more successful</p> <p><i>Keohane &amp; Nye (1977)</i></p> <p><u>Complex interdependence:</u></p> <p>4. Various means of action between actors (institutions, economic, political, cultural relations etc.);                      5. The end of hierarchy between states, leading to                      6. The decreasing use of military forces and coercive power in international relations</p>	<p><i>Wendt (1999)</i></p> <p>Power is a product of ideas and cultural contexts. And it has different meanings around the world — as in English, 'power' is not a verb as in Portuguese.</p> <p>Structural idealism comes from the position of Alexander Wendt's theory on both narratives of structural and constructivism matter.</p>	<p>It does not accomplish importance to the anarchy.</p> <p>Belief and the language itself are now micro symbols of this macro symbol called 'power'. Structures exist due to the common belief in their existence and their legal (normative) regulations. Then, 'power' is and comes from something registered by normative instruments.</p>

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