

AUTHORITY, COERCION AND POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Despite its central role in theories of international politics, scholars -- and especially realist scholars, ironically -- have an impoverished conception of power. Focusing almost exclusively on material capabilities and coercion, as the editors suggest, scholars ignore and even actively deny the role of political authority in relations between states. After distinguishing between authority and coercion as two major forms of power, I show that authority is central to variations in sovereignty, hegemonic orders, the conflict between developed and developing states, and the current debate over failed states and international trusteeship.¹ International relations cannot be explained only by material capabilities and coercion. We need to bring authority “back in” to the study of world politics.²

This chapter is more conceptual and synthetic than theoretical or empirical. Elsewhere, I have used the same conception of political authority briefly summarized below to deduce new propositions about state behavior and test those propositions against historical evidence.³ Much of the argument in this extension of that work rests on these confirmed theoretical and behavioral regularities. Here, I attempt to demonstrate the importance of authority for world politics by showing how the concept makes coherent previously problematic or incomplete theories of international relations and produces new insights for future research. Thus, the case for authority in international relations is made in this chapter not on its empirical veracity – although this

¹ In tribute to Stephen Krasner, these several literatures were selected because of his central role in their development.

² Bringing authority back in is part of the constructivist challenge to realist scholarship. Nonetheless, constructivists have, by-and-large, not questioned the existence of international anarchy, only its meaning for state practice (see Wendt 1992, 1999). Other constructivists have emphasized the role of moral authority in shaping state practice, which is different from but complementary to the arguments I develop below about political authority (see among others, Reus-Smit 1999, Finnemore 2003). See below.

³ Lake 2009.

remains the single most important criterion – but by the value it adds to a range of important literatures in the field.

State Power

Power is the primary medium of international politics. As famously defined by Robert Dahl and used as a baseline in this chapter, power is the ability of A to get B to do something he or she would otherwise not do.⁴ Power can be used to spur actors to collective action for the public good. It can also be used to redistribute resources from countries, groups, or individuals to others. These purposes are frequently linked and interactive; the use of power is not always associated with purely redistributive or zero-sum gains.⁵ Cooperation increases the social surplus, often “buying” the losers from redistribution into the bargain, while gaining a larger share is sometimes the motivation for entrepreneurs to organize collective action.

As highlighted by the editors of this volume and explored in other chapters, the international environment is complex and composed of many different types of actors wielding different types of power over one another. In this chapter, I focus on state-to-state relations for two reasons. First, despite the growth in transnational actors and global civil society, states remain essential (if no longer primary) actors in world affairs.⁶ Second, and more important, as explained by the editors conceptions of state power have been largely limited to coercion, derived from differences in the material capabilities. Yet, even in state-to-state relations, I argue, authority has been an important and enduring feature of world politics. If there is evidence of its role and effect here, authority is likely to be even more important in other types of international relationships.

Authority as Power

⁴ Dahl 1957, 202.

⁵ See Krasner 1991.

⁶ For a more developed defense of this position, see Lake 2008.

Power comes in two primary forms.⁷ In coercion, A threatens or uses violence -- Schelling's "power to hurt" -- to get B to alter his actions.⁸ B may choose to comply with A's demand to avoid pain (threatened violence) or remove it once imposed (actual violence). A's purpose is to alter B's incentives so that he chooses to behave in the manner A directs. Coercion can fail, obviously, in that A's threats and uses of violence may not always generate compliance by B. As the editor's highlight, there is often a discrepancy between power resources and outcomes. A may not be able to inflict sufficient pain to outweigh B's loss of utility in complying, or she may underestimate B's resolve and not impose a severe enough threat. Similarly, B may fear future demands and choose to resist now rather than later, or A's promise not to impose or to remove the pain may not be credible. Nonetheless, as a general rule, the greater the violence threatened or inflicted by A, the more likely B is to comply with A's demand. As explained by the editors, this is the dominant way in which power has been conceived in international relations.

In political authority, according to standard conceptions, A commands B to alter his or her actions, where command implies that A has the right to issue such orders. This right, in turn, implies a correlative obligation or duty by B to comply, if possible, with A's order. B's obligation, finally, implies a further right by A to enforce her commands in the event of B's noncompliance.⁹ In any authority relationship, B chooses whether to comply with A's commands, but is bound by the right of A to discipline or punish his noncompliance. Many drivers exceed the speed limit, for example, but if caught they accept the right of the state to

⁷ Persuasion may be a third possible form, but is not necessary for the points I want to develop here about the role of authority in relation to coercion. On persuasion, see Keohane (this volume). I also bracket "structural" forms of power to focus on agentic forms. See below and Barnett and Duvall (2005).

⁸ Schelling 1966, 2.

⁹ See Flathman 1980, 35

issue fines or other punishments for breaking the law. Noncompliance by itself does not demonstrate a lack of authority.

Authority differs from coercion in being fundamentally a collective or social construct. Although the social meaning of coercion may vary, as do the social norms governing its use, the physical ability to impose violence on another state exists independently of the self-understanding of the actors themselves. With authority, on the other hand, the right to punish noncompliance ultimately rests on the collective acceptance or *legitimacy* of the ruler's right to rule. As Thomas Hobbes himself recognized, "the power of the mighty (the Leviathan) hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the people."¹⁰ Richard Flathman develops this point more fully, arguing that sustained punishment "is impossible without substantial agreement among the members of the association about those very propositions whose rejection commonly brings coercion into play."¹¹ If recognized as legitimate, the ruler acquires the ability to punish individuals because of the broad backing of others. In extremis, an individual may deny any obligation to comply with A's laws, but if the larger community of which he is part recognizes the force of A's commands and supports A's right to punish him for violating these commands, then that individual can still be regarded as bound by A's authority.¹² Similarly, A can enforce specific edicts even in the face of opposition if her general body of commands is accepted as legitimate by a sufficiently large number of the ruled. In both cases, A's capacity to enforce her rule rests on the collective affirmation and possibly active consent of her subjects.¹³ Because a sufficient portion of the ruled accept A and her edicts as rightful, A can employ force against individual free riders and even dissidents. Knowing that a sufficient number of others support the

¹⁰ Hobbes 1651/1962, quoted in Williams 2006, 265.

¹¹ Flathman 1980, 29.

¹² Flathman 1980, 30.

¹³ Bernard 1962, 169; Lasswell and Kaplan 1950, 133.

ruler, in turn, potential free riders and dissidents are deterred from violating the rules, and overt force is rendered unnecessary or, at least, unusual. In this sense, political authority is never a dyadic trait between a ruler and a single subject, but derives from a collective that confers rights upon the ruler. As Peter Blau clarifies, from the perspective of the collectivity of subordinates, compliance with authority is voluntary, as subjects confer rights on the ruler. But from the standpoint of any individual subordinate, compliance is the result of “compelling social pressures” rooted in collective practice. As Blau concludes, “the compliance of subordinates in authority relationships is as voluntary as our custom of wearing clothes.”¹⁴

Although distinct, political authority and coercion are intimately related in the use of violence to enforce commands.¹⁵ The capacity for violence, if not actual violence, is necessary to buttress or sustain authority in the face of incentives to flout rules designed to constrain behavior. Even as he recognizes that he should comply with A’s edicts, any individual may choose to violate any rule. Duty creates only an expectation of compliance, but this does not produce or require perfect obedience. One can cheat on one’s taxes, for instance, without calling into question the government’s authority to impose taxes. Given incentives by subordinates not to comply in specific instances, the ruler must use violence to enforce edicts and, by example, to deter defection by other subordinates. Especially in large groups where free riding is likely, violence may be necessary to prevent widespread violation of commands and, thus, the erosion of authority.

Despite their analytic differences, authority and coercion are thus hard to distinguish in practice. They are deeply intertwined in their reliance on violence, making it difficult for analysts to conclude whether, in any given instance, a subordinate followed the ruler’s command out of

¹⁴ Blau 1963, 312.

¹⁵ Exclusion is another common means of enforcing political authority. See Lake 2010b.

duty or force. What does differ between these two concepts is their social meaning. In political authority, violence is used to enforce rules regarded as legitimate by the community over which it is wielded. In coercion, violence is illegitimate, often itself a violation of rules and, therefore, possibly subject to punishment by some authority. Nonetheless, in any given instance, there is no bright line separating authority and coercion, and I offer none here.¹⁶ This is not a failure of the analysis but rather a reflection of the intimate connection between political authority and coercion.

Political authority is also distinct from other forms of legitimate social influence or power. Although the ruler and her rules must be legitimate to be in authority, other legitimate constraints on human action exist.¹⁷ Social norms are also legitimate – otherwise they would not be norms – and can limit the actions of those subject to those norms. Likewise, expertise can make an actor an authority, with a legitimate right to speak and possibly compel action on issues pertaining to its knowledge.¹⁸ In focusing on authority here, and especially political authority, I emphasize the ruler's *right* to issue certain types of limited commands. Thus, in my conception, political authority is an agentic form of power different from other equally legitimate but more disembodied or structural forms of power originating within global civil society discussed elsewhere in this volume.¹⁹

Forms of Authority in World Politics

Political authority arises in many forms. The right to rule has been variously understood to derive from the charisma of individual leaders (charismatic authority), tradition that is socially

¹⁶ In Lake 2009, however, I operationalize the concept of international hierarchy and demonstrate that valid indicators of authority differ from those commonly used to measure international coercive power. See esp. Table 3.1, p.81.

¹⁷ In this way, the phrase “legitimate authority” is redundant, while the phrase “authority is legitimate” is purely definitional.

¹⁸ Flathman (1980) famously distinguishes between being in authority and being an authority along these lines.

¹⁹ On structural power, see Barnett and Duvall 2005.

accepted and reproduced through ritualized ceremony (traditional authority), or religious deities (religious authority).²⁰ All have played a role in legitimating political leaders and institutions in different historical moments and continue to play a role in the world today. Joseph Nye's notion of "soft power," for instance, is a variant of charismatic authority.²¹ In the modern era, however, political authority largely rests on one of two primary foundations: law or, I argue, a social contract.

In formal-legal authority, A's ability to command B, the community of subordinates, and the willingness of B to comply, follows from the lawful position or office that A holds.²² In this conception, A, the person (or unit) in authority, possesses the right to issue laws and rules due to the office that A occupies and not to any personal qualities that A may possess.²³ This formal-legal conception of authority was embodied in juristic theories of the state and, in turn, imported into international relations, reaching its apogee in the writings of Kenneth Waltz.²⁴ Since there is no duly constituted *legal* authority above states, it follows that there can be no authority between states.

Although perhaps useful for analyzing established domestic hierarchies, a formal-legal conception is of dubious relevance for the study of international relations. Most important, this approach cannot explain the emergence of authority from within the state of nature. If political authority derives from lawful office, law must precede authority. But if political authority creates law, then authority must precede lawful office. This "chicken-and-egg" problem implies that the origins of authority must rest on something other than a formal-legal order. If authority cannot

²⁰ Weber 1978, 31-38, 215-254.

²¹ Nye 2002.

²² Weber 1978, 215-226.

²³ Flathman 1980, 35.

²⁴ On juristic theories of the state, anarchy, and international relations, see Schmidt 1998. The concept of anarchy is most developed in Waltz 1979.

derive from a formal-legal order in the first instance, it must be that authority is compatible with or at least can arise in the state of nature. Thus, it is possible that authority can exist within an otherwise “anarchic” international system.

Relational authority, premised on a social contract, is founded on an exchange between ruler and ruled in which A provides a political order of value to B sufficient to offset the loss of freedom incurred in his subordination to A, and B confers the right on A to exert the restraints on his behavior necessary to provide that order. In equilibrium, a ruler provides just enough political order to gain the compliance of the ruled to the taxes and constraints required to sustain that order, and B complies just enough to induce A to actually provide it. A gets a sufficient return on effort to make the provision of political order worthwhile, and B gets sufficient order to offset the loss of freedom entailed in accepting A’s authority. If A extracts too much or provides too little order, B can withdraw his compliance, and A’s authority evaporates. In this way, relational authority, contingent on the actions of both the ruler and ruled, is an equilibrium produced and reproduced through on-going interactions.

Even though states lack formal-legal authority over one another, they can and do possess more or less relational authority, premised on the provision of an international order.²⁵ The terms of any social contract are determined by the outside options of each party as well as prevailing norms of procedural justice and fairness.²⁶ The ability to project force over distance and create order far from home is necessary for relational authority, and thus typically limits international authority to “great powers,” although some limited authority may also be exercised by regional powers. Yet, international authority in the nineteenth century also rested on norms of racial and cultural superiority that justified and “normalized” global inequalities and permitted European

²⁵ Lake 2009.

²⁶ For a theory of hierarchy, see Lake 1999a. On the importance of justice and fairness in support for authority, see Tyler 1990 and 1995.

powers to rule over vast colonial empires.²⁷ Despite its greater coercive powers today, norms of human equality and national self-determination constrain the United States and limit its authority to spheres of influence or, at most, “empires by invitation.”²⁸ That relational authority rests on the exchange of order for compliance does not preclude the influence of other factors in setting the terms of the social contract. Explaining varying patterns of international authority remains a challenge, long ignored, that can be taken up once the role of authority in world politics is more fully revealed.

International Authority

Scholars of international politics, especially realists, have failed to understand the distinction between coercion and authority and that both are forms of power. The distinction is conceptual, even definitional. They are at one level simply words, as Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, that mean only what we choose them to mean – “neither more nor less.” Limiting conceptions of authority to the formal-legal variety, however, scholars assume that international politics is anarchic or devoid of authority and, thus, focus only on variations in coercive capacity. Their emphasis on coercion at the expense of authority in world affairs leads to impoverished theory and, at best, incomplete explanations of empirical trends.

Though blurred in reality and hard to discern even through a more analytic lens, the real test of the distinction between coercion and authority is whether it allows us to see better patterns of international politics in the real world. Elsewhere, I have demonstrated that international authority is associated a syndrome of behaviors by both dominant and subordinate states that is not predicted or anticipated by traditional theories that focus only on coercion.²⁹ In particular,

²⁷ Crawford 2002, Chapter 3.

²⁸ On norms of national self-determination, see Jackson 1990. The phrase “empire by invitation” is from Lundestad 1990.

²⁹ Lake 2009.

dominant states provide a political order of value to their subordinates, and accordingly are significantly more likely to join crises in which a subordinate state is involved. Enjoying the protection provided by the dominant state, in turn, subordinate states spend less on defense and engage in higher levels of international trade, especially with others tied to the same dominant state, than non-subordinate states. Legitimizing the policies of their protector, subordinates are also more likely to follow dominant states in wars and, especially, to join coalitions of the willing, even though they often contribute little beyond their verbal support and could easily free ride on the efforts of others. Finally, dominant states discipline subordinates who violate their commands both by intervening to replace local leaders and ostracizing them from normal political intercourse through sanctions or other barriers to exchange (e.g., the United States and Cuba). Such behavioral patterns are the ultimate measure of the importance both analytically and practically of international authority. Here, however, I hope to show in a review of four distinct literatures that our understanding can also be enriched by recognizing the authoritative nature of some (but certainly not all) relationships in world politics.

Sovereignty: Organized Hierarchy

Sovereignty is a principle defining how authority should be organized within and between states. It rests on three primary assumptions.³⁰ The sovereign possesses ultimate or final authority over all people and territory in a given realm. That is, within any fixed territory, the sovereign has no authority above him. External actors, in turn, are excluded from possessing or exercising authority over the people or territory of the sovereign. Finally, sovereignty is indivisible, a whole that cannot be shared or divided. Together, these three assumptions imply that authority within a territorially delimited realm must culminate in a single apex at the level of the state. Westphalian or juridical sovereignty is claimed by all states today, even though the

³⁰ Krasner 1999, 9-26; Lake 2009, 45-51.

necessary conditions may not actually be satisfied. Moreover, that states are, in fact, sovereign is assumed in many theories of international relations, especially realist approaches.

Revisionists have demonstrated that reality, however, is very different than the principle of sovereignty. Krasner finds that in practice the deviations from assumed sovereignty are sufficiently frequent and significant as to charge the whole as “organized hypocrisy.”³¹ Revisionists explain anomalies in sovereignty largely as product of coercion. Deviations from principle arise in this view because states pursue interests and, through coercion, create exceptions in weaker states when and where they can. Thus, Krasner shows, powerful states create unequal rights and obligations in weaker states for protecting minorities and human rights, sovereign debt, and so forth, creating a practice that is in direct violation of the principle of sovereignty.³² Nonetheless, these anomalies remain just that – anomalies. Focusing only on coercion-based deviations from the principle of sovereignty, revisionists offer no metric for aggregating these exceptions into any larger whole or pattern.

A focus on authority, alternatively, interprets these anomalies as patterns of security and economic hierarchy in international relations in which sovereignty is contingent, often partial, and always contested.³³ Most important, authority is not indivisible, and does not culminate in a single apex. Rather, it is multidimensional, divisible, and possessed by many different actors both within states -- private authorities -- and more important between states, with dominant states exercising more or less authority over subordinate ones.³⁴ This is obvious in the case of formal overseas empires, such as those possessed by the European great powers in the nineteenth century. But a variety of partial hierarchies continue to exist in the world today. That the

³¹ Krasner 1999.

³² Krasner 1999. See also Krasner 2001.

³³ Lake 2009, Chapter 2.

³⁴ On private authorities within the global system, see Biersteker and Hall 2002, Cutler et al. 1999, Avant et al. 2010. For an extension of the conception of authority summarized here to private authorities, see Lake 2010b.

countries of Latin American have been prohibited by the United States from allying with any great power other than itself since the late nineteenth century, for instance, is not just a one-off exception to the principle of sovereignty, but an enduring restraint on their ability to decide their foreign policies freely and a corresponding transfer of authority over their affairs to Washington. Similarly, Japan, Germany and even most of Europe during the Cold War were not free to conduct independent foreign policies but were limited to allying with the United States and complying with its defense policy dictates. Limiting power to coercion blinds us to these patterned and enduring relationships. Conversely, conceiving of these relationships as varying in their degree of authority allows analysts to treat hierarchy as a variable within the international system.³⁵

This distinction between coercively imposed exceptions to a rule of sovereignty and patterns of authority between states is not just academic, in the full derogatory meaning of that term. Organized hypocrisy implies that states act internationally to augment their capabilities so as to defend themselves against coercion from others or to make greater demands of others in the future. In Krasner's classic rendering, the United States intervened in other states to defend its national interest in raw materials defined in increasing order of importance as: 1) increasing competition, 2) ensuring security of raw materials supply, and 3) promoting broad foreign policy objectives, including material benefits for American society as a whole and ideological objectives.³⁶ The first two goals limit the coercive leverage raw materials producers may wield over the United States, while the last embodies the positive pursuit of American goals through coercion. More generally, Krasner argues, when the United States used military force, the ultimate form of coercion, it was in its self-defined interests.

³⁵ On variations along dimensions of hierarchy, including in Latin America, see Lake 2009, Chapter 3. See also Weber 2000, Cooley 2005, Cooley and Spruyt 2009, and Hancock 2009.

³⁶ Krasner 1978.

Authority implies that dominant states also act to legitimate themselves in the eyes of subordinates. Much like the feasting and gift cultures of the South Pacific, where ceremonial banquets and exchanges can nearly bankrupt rulers but serve to create debts of reciprocity and reinforce authority, these actions can sometimes appear irrational or counter-productive.³⁷ Although in relational authority benefits are generally skewed towards dominant states that write the rules of international order, such states must still act to create and maintain political orders of value to subordinates even when it is inconvenient for them to do so. For the United States, this has meant intervening in militarized disputes on behalf of subordinates even when they have no direct interest in the conflict. Dominant states must also discipline subordinates who violate the rules of the international order they create or challenge their authority. In an extreme case, the United States has vigorously sought to ostracize Cuba for nearly five decades, a seemingly futile and costly effort against a miniscule power that makes little sense other than as an attempt by a authoritative state to discipline a wayward subordinate. Finally, and perhaps most important, dominant states must also restrain their own authority and coercive powers to enhance their claims to only limited rule over others. As but one example, the United States has consistently wrapped its authority in multilateralism in the postwar era and, especially, in the 1990s as it sought to expand into new regions, including the Persian Gulf. By giving other countries some ability to “check and balance” its authority, or at least to pull a “fire alarm” should it attempt to abuse its authority, multilateralism served as a costly signal that the United States was willing to exercise its leadership only within the bounds of what other states regarded as legitimate.³⁸ In authoritative relations, dominant countries, at least, do not define their national interests in narrow self-seeking terms, as implied in a world of only coercion. Rather, they see an interest in

³⁷ Diehl 2000; Godelier and Strathern 1991; Sahlins 2000.

³⁸ Lake 2009, Chapter 4.

political order, in general, and are willing to pay costs and forego actions they might otherwise choose to create and sustain their legitimate right to rule over others.

Sovereignty is not a static condition, but a variable. As the authority of the state over more issue areas expands, its sovereignty expands as well. Conversely, as it cedes authority over issues to others, including other states, its sovereignty contracts. Sovereignty, like all authority, is always and everywhere contingent and negotiated with the collectivity of subordinates, who grant the “sovereign” certain limited rights to command. Enlarging our focus to include authority as power allows us to “see” and explain greater ranges of relationships and behaviors in international relations.

Authority and the Structure of International Trade

The Theory of Hegemonic Stability captured the imaginations of many scholars of international political economy, but then faded due to theoretical and empirical problems.³⁹ One variant, leadership theory, posited that hegemonic states provided public goods as uniquely “privileged groups,” but it was never clear analytically why small groups of large states could not do so as well.⁴⁰ A second variant, hegemony theory, expected states to have varying, structurally determined interests in economic openness, and that free trade would arise only as a result of coercion by the dominant state.⁴¹ Yet, sound microfoundations were never provided for why hegemons would have more intense interests in free trade than others. Problems of hegemonic “afterglow,” which Krasner attributed to domestic institutional friction,⁴² and the absence of overt attempts by either Great Britain or the United States to coerce others to open to

³⁹ See Gilpin 1975, 1977, Krasner 1976, and Keohane 1980 for foundational works. On problems, see Lake 1993.

⁴⁰ Kindleberger 1973. On the possibility of privileged groups greater than one, see Lake 1984; Snidal 1985.

⁴¹ Gilpin 1975; Krasner 1976; Gowa 1994; Lake 1988.

⁴² Krasner 1976; see also Brawley 1999.

trade dealt death blows to the theory.⁴³ The rapid globalization of the world economy after the supposed decline of the United States in the 1970s shut off further work on this approach.

Nonetheless, hegemonic stability theory called attention to the role of Great Powers and political power more generally in determining the nature and extent of globalization.

A focus on authority, noted by Gilpin but not fully developed,⁴⁴ resolves many of the analytic problems in hegemonic stability theory and, today, poses a new research agenda for economic liberalization and globalization. Hegemony can be understood as a set of dyadic hierarchies centered on a single dominant state, such as the United States and Western Europe and Northeast Asia since 1945. Hierarchies are held together by promises of international order such as the Pax Britannica, in which Britain ruled the waves, and the Pax Americana, in which the United States today rules the air. Detering challengers through the atomic bomb and forward-based defense forces and governing others directly and indirectly through the Bretton Woods institutions, the United States exchanges order for legitimacy. With order, countries rely upon the hegemon for protection and, as noted above, open themselves to international trade, and especially to trade with other states subordinate to the same hegemon.⁴⁵ Subordinates also follow the rules laid down by the dominant state. Coercion is not central to this system but rather is the exception, necessary only against “outsiders” who do not recognize the authority of the hegemon (e.g., the Soviet Union and its allies during the Cold War) and to discipline wayward subordinates (e.g., the Suez Crisis, Cuba). Coercion should be rare and anomalous, and its absence should not detract from the theory.⁴⁶ Similarly, authoritatively-provided international orders may need to be provided by a single hegemonic state. Although authority can be divided

⁴³ McKeown 1989.

⁴⁴ Gilpin 1981, 30.

⁴⁵ Lake 2009, 151-61.

⁴⁶ Contrary to McKeown 1989.

by issue area between states, in any given area order is best provided and conflicts avoided when there is a single “ultimate” authority able to determine the rules and adjudicate disputes. In the absence of supranational third parties that govern states equally, international authority is most effectively organized under a single state. Thus, while in principle collective action problems can be solved by privileged groups of more than one state, authoritative orders may arise most frequently and effectively under a single hegemonic state.

In turn, authority is not strictly material and, as a social construct, can persist long after coercive capabilities wane. Authority, of course, requires some coercive capability to protect subordinates and punish violators, as above, but legitimate rule is not related to material capabilities in any one-to-one relationship. Order and authority can be maintained more easily than they are created. Subordinate states “buy into” the hegemonic order and thereby empower the dominant country to use coercion legitimately, which reduces opposition and countervailing coalitions that might otherwise arise and constrain the use of force. Moreover, subordinate (and dominant) states eventually develop vested interests in the authority and order of the hegemon which give them incentives to actively support the dominant state, its efforts, and its uses of force when necessary. In this way, the exchange of order for legitimacy central to relational authority, itself an equilibrium, becomes more robust over time.⁴⁷ Order and authority decline, in turn, only when the subordinates withdraw their consent, the hegemon abuses its authority by acting in its self-interest rather than the general interest (as happened in the early 1970s with the Nixon shocks and incipient protectionism and in 2003 in the Iraq War), or the hegemon can clearly no longer provide the required order. Focusing on authority rather than coercion, afterglow is not a theoretical anomaly but an *expected* feature of hegemonic orders.

⁴⁷ Lake 2009, 30-33 and 41-43.

Finally, understanding the authoritative rather than coercive roots of hegemony also explains why international orders in the modern world are likely to be liberal orders. Economic theory strongly implies that all states have an interest in freer trade, even though particular groups or sectors within them may prefer greater protection for their products.⁴⁸ But just as economic actors within states need order to invest in production facilities and to exchange goods, states themselves on behalf of their economic actors need a modicum of international order to protect rights in property, engage in a division of labor, and rely on foreign producers for essential goods and services. Without order, states are reluctant to open themselves to high levels of international exchange regardless of its immediate welfare effects. Liberal states, in turn, are more likely to succeed as hegemons.⁴⁹ For a state to subordinate itself to another is a profound decision. It gives up a measure of policy autonomy, commits to following rules decided by the dominant state, and opens itself to the possibility of punishment in the event that it violates the rules or attempts to rescind the authority it granted to the other. To consent to its authority, the subordinate must be confident that the dominant state will not abuse its authority at some subsequent date. Liberal states are more likely to be credible in their commitments to agreed limits on their authority over other states.⁵⁰ Democracy and divided powers create internal checks and balances that constrain state authority and create large spheres of private autonomy or private rights.⁵¹ In turn, domestic actors adapt to and prosper within these spheres, supporting private property rights, limited government regulation, and generally competitive markets. There is no guarantee that their internal characteristics will always prevent abuse -- liberal empires have arisen historically -- but the same limits on state authority at home serve to limit the

⁴⁸ Frieden and Rogowski 1996.

⁴⁹ See Gilpin 1977.

⁵⁰ Lake 2009, 124-6; Martin 2000.

⁵¹ McDonald 2009.

exercise of authority abroad as well and make liberal states more “reliable partners.”⁵² As a result, liberal states are more likely to be granted authority by others. Moreover, with either innate or selected preferences for liberal economic orders at home, domestic interests in liberal states typically prefer liberal orders abroad that protect private property, limit concentrations of market power, and encourage trade and investment. In this way, liberal states with the support of their liberal domestic interest groups generalize their domestic systems to the international level.⁵³ It is not that hegemons are inherently more liberal than other states, but liberal states are more likely to become hegemonic.

A focus on authority thus resolves many of the theoretical and empirical problems at the heart of earlier, more coercive versions of the Theory of Hegemonic Stability. It builds upon the persistent intuition that power is central to the structure of the international economy, and suggests that the conditions for international economic liberalism are not so different than those for domestic liberalism -- and that authority, albeit limited authority, is necessary for both. This rehabilitation of hegemonic stability theory and the continued authority of the United States that it renders visible help explain the continued liberalism of the international economy – even after the 2008 financial crisis, the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression.

Authority and Dissent: The Third World Against Global Liberalism

The New International Economic Order (NIEO) demanded by developing countries in the 1970s posed a significant challenge to the liberal international order created and led by the United States. Propelled by OPEC’s initial success in raising the real price of oil, the NIEO focused attention on global inequality and demanded the “authoritative allocation” of resources, or the political regulation of international trade and finance in explicit opposition to liberal

⁵² Lipson 2003.

⁵³ Lake 1999b.

markets.⁵⁴ The effort failed, subsequently being replaced by the “Washington consensus,” which glorified pro-market economic reforms and international openness.

From a focus on coercion, the NIEO is anomalous. The weakest members of the international system sought to rewrite the rules of the international economy, propagated by the United States and other developed countries. It was a bold call for a new redistributive bargain. The question from this perspective, however, is not why did the NIEO fail but why did the developing states even bother and why did the developed countries take their demands as seriously as they did? Krasner argues, correctly, that the developing countries achieved their limited successes only when they were able to affirm principles of international or juridical sovereignty and exploit the rules of international institutions that gave them voice.⁵⁵ This is true as an empirical observation, but ignores the reality that both sovereignty and the rules of international regimes are themselves political institutions largely controlled, as Krasner later showed, by powerful states.⁵⁶

To see the NIEO as simply redistributive bargaining is to interpret it too narrowly. It was about redistributing the gains from exchange, to be sure, but more fundamentally it was an attempt to challenge the overarching authority of the United States, which depends in large part on subordinates recognizing the legitimacy of the dominant state and its rules. It was the threat of collective defiance and the rejection of the claim that the United States had the right to set the rules of the international economy that made the NIEO so fraught. Even if developing countries got little at the bargaining table -- which was the eventual result, foreseen from the very beginning -- a collective denial of the authority of the United States both promised to the developing countries an opportunity to participate in writing a new global order and, in turn,

⁵⁴ Krasner 1985.

⁵⁵ Krasner 1985.

⁵⁶ Krasner 1983, 1999.

threatened those vested in the current American-led order. The NIEO is more fully understood as a collective act of defiance by otherwise subordinate states.

Like any opposition movement, the Group of 77 backing the NIEO contained both reformers, who wanted to modify the rules, and revolutionaries, who sought to overturn the entire system of authority. This split ultimately weakened the demands for reform. Even the strategies adopted by the G77, however, reflected the pervasive nature of American authority. The emphasis on sovereignty was not just a bargaining ploy but an attempt to limit America's authority over economic policies of developing states. By insisting on full national sovereignty, and reclaiming national autonomy over their own affairs, developing countries sought to reduce the areas of policy subject to U.S. rule. In turn, postwar international institutions that permitted developing countries to give voice to their demands were designed to create checks and balances on American hierarchy, which they then artfully exploited.⁵⁷ These institutions could not be shut down or their members silenced because they served a larger purpose of constraining American authority. In fact, they worked as intended as a safety valve for complaints with American rule that produced cautious reforms on the part of the United States.

Equally important, the NIEO was beaten back because of the support of the community of other subordinates, largely other developed states, that continued to recognize America's authority and support its rules. The best prospect for success by the developing world was to divide and conquer the developed nations, offering special access to their economies in exchange for meeting some or all of their demands. By and large, however, the developed countries remained a solid bloc and continued to support American leadership. Even in natural resources policy, the area where the NIEO went furthest and major producers were able to dangle attractive bilateral deals before consumers, the developed countries maintained a degree of unity. Though

⁵⁷ Lake 2009, 126-8.

they did not succeed in creating a consumer's cartel to break the one maintained by producers, the developed countries did enact an oil sharing regime that considerably blunted OPEC's impact;⁵⁸ by the late 1980s the real price of oil had returned to pre-1973 levels. Similarly, preferential trade agreements, like the Lomé Convention, could have torn apart the coalition of developed countries, but in the end merely reinforced prior regional or colonial hierarchies. Deeply vested in the Pax Americana, Europe and Northeast Asia did not defect to any significant extent. As long as enough other members of a community recognize the legitimacy of a ruler, this empowers that ruler to ignore or even discipline members who challenge its authority.⁵⁹ With solid backing of other developed countries, who generally benefited from the biases in the American-led international order and possessed significant interests vested in that order, the United States was able to stand firm against calls for fundamental reform of the international economy and, indeed, to ostracize the most vociferous dissidents.

Having defeated the challenge from the NIEO, the United States succeeded in integrating much of the developing world into its international order through the process of globalization and the policies embodied in the so-called Washington consensus. Through the 1990s, countries liberalized their economies both domestically and internationally, with most abandoning failed policies of import-substituting industrialization and capital market restrictions. Even China and India, the largest and most important holdouts from the American-led order, liberalized their economies and became dependent on export-led growth by the end of the century. Today, only a handful of "rogue" regimes dominated by nationalist-religious-protectionist coalitions remain to

⁵⁸ Keohane 1984, Chapter 10.

⁵⁹ Lake 2009, 18-9.

challenge the Pax American, with North Korea, Iran, Iraq before 2003, and increasingly Venezuela forming a vanguard that now defies America's authority.⁶⁰

More consequentially, however, radical anti-globalization elements who failed to undermine the authority of the United States through the NIEO and other maneuvers have now taken up a global insurgency against the Pax Americana. Having succeeded in bringing new states into its order, the United States now faces non-state groups that have taken up arms against its authority and hide within the interstices of the global system. The anti-globalization program that found voice in the NIEO has now morphed into an increasingly violent movement opposed to "the West."

Sharing Authority: Failed States and Neotrusteeship

The global insurgency now confronting the United States is being fought by private, non-state groups hiding within failed states, which offer insurgents safe havens either in exchange for resources or, de facto, because they cannot prevent them from operating within their borders. Although this policy began before 9/11 made the insurgency manifest, the United States has responded by attempting to rebuild failed states and erecting international trusteeships over their affairs.⁶¹ By helping states reestablish authority over their territories, the United States hopes to shrink the safe havens and choke off the insurgents. By developing and democratizing failed states, the United States also hopes to recruit new subordinates for its international order.⁶²

The problems of rebuilding failed states and the difficulties of establishing effective trusteeships pose another paradox for approaches that understand coercion as the only (or even the primary) form of international power. Failed states are, almost by definition, the weakest members of the international community. The United States has the coercive capability if it

⁶⁰ Solingen 1998.

⁶¹ Krasner 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Bain 2003.

⁶² Lake 2010c.

chooses to use it to intervene at will for any purpose -- to track down and kill terrorists, to station troops to monitor and interrupt supply routes and communications, to promote friendly governments, and other more ambitious agendas.⁶³ In terms of coercive capabilities, relations between the United States and various failed states are among the most asymmetrical in human history. Recognizing this fact, however, adds little to our understanding of why statebuilding and trusteeship are so problematic in the modern age.⁶⁴ Focusing on authority, however, reveals the core of the problems currently confronting the United States.

First, whatever else it might entail, statebuilding is first and foremost a process of restoring the authority of the state. Following Max Weber's famous definition, states fail by either losing their monopoly over violence or their legitimacy.⁶⁵ Rebuilding either is hard. Failed states fail for a reason. Deep seated conflicts of interest or historical distrust and animosity typically lead to immobilism or violence, which then often exacerbate the underlying cleavages. Walter describes the rebuilding of the state's monopoly of violence as the "critical barrier" to civil war settlement.⁶⁶ Perhaps even tougher, however, is rebuilding the legitimacy of the state. Short of total victory by one side in often multi-sided conflicts, the political differences that led the state to fail must be accommodated by changing the prior institutions and rules, but there is no political foundation on which to build new institutions. In the anarchy that exists after state failure, groups face the enormously difficult task of rebuilding legitimacy in an environment of fear, animosity, and often hate without any established ground rules for political decision-making. Rebuilding an authoritative government that has the support of its population is no easy task.

⁶³ Note that the choice to intervene is not the same as the choice to succeed, or to succeed at the level of resources devoted to the goal. Statebuilding may well be beyond the ability of any external power to accomplish successfully.

⁶⁴ See Stein, this volume.

⁶⁵ Weber 1978. See also Lake 2010a.

⁶⁶ Walter 1997.

Outside powers like the United States can sometimes play a catalytic role in statebuilding by setting new rules of politics, developed in consultation with local stakeholders, and enhancing the credibility of this new regime.⁶⁷ Statebuilding is analogous to the problem of cycling in legislative majorities.⁶⁸ In any multi-dimensional issue space with no established rules and no agenda-setter, there may be no stable equilibrium; one coalition is displaced by a second, which is displaced by a third, which is then possibly displaced by the first, and so on, as witnessed in the on-going political tragedy that is Somalia today. By declaring that this set of rules rather than some other set will prevail, and that it is prepared to defend these rules against challenges, the outside power can create a focal point around which coalitions can stabilize -- as with rules of procedure in legislatures, the outside power can “induce” an equilibrium.⁶⁹ Despite this catalytic role, however, the new state’s legitimacy always rests on the people. Although an outside power can impose a focal point, it cannot make people accept it as “rightful.” Legitimacy must grow from the ground up, it cannot be imposed from the top down.⁷⁰ The role of the United States or any other outside actor in statebuilding is inherently limited.

Second, intervention in failed states violates the principle of Westphalian sovereignty defended vigorously by states, especially post-colonial states, as a means of limiting the authority of former colonial powers or other great powers over their affairs.⁷¹ Approving intervention in failed states risks recognizing the right of states to intervene in or exercise authority over any state. Following the logic of the slippery slope, if it is rightful for the United States (or any great power) to intervene in, say, Somalia, a state clearly unable to govern itself, what is to prevent it from claiming the right to intervene in states that systematically abuse

⁶⁷ Lake 2010a.

⁶⁸ For an overview of the problem of cycling and its manifestations, see Schwartz 1987.

⁶⁹ On structure-induced equilibria, see Shepsle 1979.

⁷⁰ Lake 2010a.

⁷¹ Krasner 1999; Jackson 1990.

human rights (e.g., as the Bush administration did in Iraq), adopt policies that produce high economic inequality or conversely violate property rights (e.g., as in earlier cases of expropriation), or perhaps have regimes that Washington simply dislikes (e.g., Grenada)? Approving a right to intervene in failed states is a risky first step toward broader interventionary powers. This is not a question of coercive capabilities, but rather one of what rights do states -- and especially great powers -- have to govern in whole or part other states.

As Krasner has shown, states have long intervened in one another's affairs and abridged their sovereignty.⁷² Neotrusteeship has arisen to recognize and at the same time to limit the authority of individual states over other states.⁷³ Old style trusteeship originated in an attempt to limit unilateral assertions of rights by imperial states to rule other territories. League of Nation mandates and, later, United Nations strategic trust territories, in essence, sought to regulate imperialism and the forfeiture of sovereignty by subordinate units by requiring the approval of a duly constituted body of other, already sovereign states. Both mechanisms, however, lacked effective monitoring and oversight provisions, and thus gave trustees a free hand in governing the trust territories for as long as they wanted.⁷⁴ Neotrusteeship, as developed after the end of the Cold War, expands this practice by requiring 1) the consent of some recognized body of sovereign states, usually but not always the United Nations Security Council, 2) a specific mandate outlining the purpose of the intervention, 3) stronger oversight mechanisms with periodic reporting and reauthorization, and 4) a limited timetable for withdrawing and restoring sovereignty to the territory or turning the legal administration of the territory over to the United Nations or another international body. By defining and tightly regulating the rights of the trustee, the international community is attempting in practice to solve the problem of failed states while

⁷² Krasner 1999.

⁷³ Krasner 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2004.

⁷⁴ Bain 2003.

at the same time limiting the authority of would-be trustees. But it is old wine in new bottles. Partly because of its roots in past imperial practice, neotrusteeship is still too controversial to be approved by the United Nations in principle. Nonetheless, it is now close to common policy in cases of failed states. As the exception that proves the rule, the United States violated this emergent practice in invading Iraq without the approval of the United Nations. This likely explains why the international community reacted so unfavorably towards the war and, even today, refuses to offer the United States any significant assistance in rebuilding the country.

Ironically, the restrictions that make neotrusteeship acceptable to the international community may also make it ineffective in rebuilding failed states. Based on a limited number of historical cases, scholars have argued that statebuilding attempts that begin early, before the violence has become widespread, are more likely to succeed.⁷⁵ But by the time that the international community agrees that a state has indeed failed, it is usually quite late in the process. It is also increasingly recognized that statebuilding is a broad, multidimensional process that requires addressing the problems within society that caused the state to fail in the first place.⁷⁶ Narrow and strict mandates, intentionally designed to limit the authority of the trustee, cut against this goal. Finally, as noted, trustees are often most helpful in establishing the credibility of a newly reconstituted state. Limited time horizons and fixed timetables for withdrawal or transition, however, undermine the credibility of the trustee's commitment. Rather than encouraging groups to take the new rules of politics as "given," groups anticipate that the trustee's time is limited and either keep fighting or merely wait for it to depart before contesting the state's authority once again.⁷⁷ Given the difficulties of statebuilding in general, finding the

⁷⁵ Paris 2004; Rotberg 2004.

⁷⁶ Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Paris and Sisk 2009.

⁷⁷ Lake and Rothchild 1996.

right balance between limits on the authority of the trustees and the authority they need to succeed remains elusive.

The larger point, however, is that the politics of statebuilding and neotrusteeship are not about coercion, which remains highly asymmetric, but are all about how to restore authority within failed states and, in turn, manage authority between states. Nothing suggests more clearly that international politics is not only a realm of “power politics,” if by that we mean coercive capabilities, but is also an arena of authority by states over states.

Conclusion

Political realists, subversive or not,⁷⁸ have long maintained that international politics are, as Hans Morgenthau subtitled his classic text, a struggle for power.⁷⁹ Nothing in this essay challenges this central tenet. Where scholars and realists typically err, however, is in limiting power to material resources and coercive capabilities. Authority is at least an equal form of power. Indeed, given that it is usually easier to gain compliance by obligating others to follow one’s will rather than through force of arms alone,⁸⁰ authority may actually be a preferred form of power, with coercion coming into play only to defend authority or when authority itself cannot be obtained.

Recognizing the authoritative nature of world politics has profound implications for international relations theory and practice. Assuming that all relations between states are anarchic, realists portray world politics as a Hobbesian state-of-nature, the proverbial war “of everyman, against everyman.”⁸¹ As seen even in this brief reconstruction of several literatures, in the pursuit of authority dominant states provide international orders of benefit to subordinates,

⁷⁸ Keohane, this volume.

⁷⁹ Morgenthau 1978. Morgenthau added “and peace,” but this goal is often overlooked by realists.

⁸⁰ Levi 1988.

⁸¹ Hobbes 1651/1962.

discipline subordinates that fail to comply with the rules of order or challenge their authority, and tie their own hands through multilateralism and other means to commit credibly to limits on their authority. Subordinate states, in turn, typically do comply with the rules of order and accept the dominant state's position as "rule maker" as rightful or legitimate. Although they may not benefit from order to the same degree as dominant states, they still benefit on net compared to their next best alternative -- the state of nature. They rely on the protection of the dominant state, and enjoy unusually low defense spending, and open themselves to trade and the benefits of the international division of labor. Seeking autonomy, however, subordinates aim to limit the authority of dominant states over their affairs and try to gain the best bargain they can from its order. Subordinates adopt strategies of resistance and exploit the fetters that dominant states must use to bind themselves. Though a contest for power, international politics are equally a struggle for authority and autonomy.

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