

Repertoires of Statecraft: Instruments and Logics of Power Politics

Conditionally Accepted at *International Relations*

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Abstract

Issues involving ‘statecraft’ lie at the heart of most major debates about world politics, yet scholars do not go far enough in analyzing how the processes of statecraft themselves can reshape the international system. We draw on the growing relational-processual literature in international relations theory to explore how different modes of statecraft can help create and refashion the structure of world politics. In particular, we argue that scholars should reconceive statecraft in terms of *repertoires*. An emphasis on repertoires sheds light on a number of issues, including how statecraft influences patterns of technological innovation, the construction of institutional and normative orders, and the pathways through which states mobilize power in world politics.

Keywords: repertoires, statecraft, power politics, international order, relationalism, networks, international structure, technological change

What is statecraft? Kalevi Holsti defines statecraft, in the context of international politics, ‘as the organized actions governments take to change the external environment in general or the policies and actions of others states in particular to achieve the objectives set by policymakers’.¹ As Lauro Martines argues, there is a ‘stress on technique, on the *way* matters of state are handled’.² The tools of statecraft, then, combine *instruments of power*—such as various kinds of military, diplomatic, and economic capital— with the *strategic logics* of their employment. Matters of statecraft concern the overall toolkit available to states, the choice among those tools, and the effects of their use.³

The year 1919 marked an important moment for the study and practice of statecraft. The Covenant of the League of Nations, negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference, represented an ambitious attempt to channel and regulate statecraft. In the eyes of many, the catastrophe of the First World War discredited many existing tools of statecraft—from secret alliances to war itself, which Clausewitz influentially brought within the fold of statecraft by characterizing it as ‘politics by other means’.⁴ The League of Nations not only actively sought to delimit forms of acceptable statecraft, but it also itself became a site, and object, for statecraft.

The League of Nation’s failure to prevent another catastrophic great-power war did not end efforts to control the toolkits of statecraft. The United Nations (UN) and the Bretton Woods System—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the development banks that would eventually form the World Bank—aimed to shape how states pursued power and wealth, often to the benefit of the leading powers. The expansion of international organizations and institutions, including the creation of bureaucratized multilateral alliances, accelerated and produced—whether deliberately and inadvertently—mutations in statecraft. But the Cold War also witnessed the development of ‘nuclear statecraft’,⁵ as well as the scaling up of covert tools of statecraft, including efforts by intelligence services to mount coup d’états and the use of clandestine military intervention designed to conceal the role of great powers, such as in the US-

led overthrow in 1954 of Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán.⁶ Despite such darker sides of the post-war order, many observers and policymakers now fret about the unraveling of the ‘liberal international order’—that is, a reversion to an environment characterized more by coarser, less rules-based forms of statecraft.⁷

Thus, issues involving ‘statecraft’ lie at the heart of most major debates about international relations and world politics. Today there is no dearth of work that deals with statecraft—that studies how states wield military, economic, diplomatic, and even cultural tools in order to expand their influence in international politics. Much of this literature explains variation in statecraft over time in terms of structural changes in international politics, domestically within states, or both. These include growing political and economic interdependence, the rise of international institutions, changes in norms governing appropriate state behavior, technological innovation, and shifts in underlying capabilities enjoyed by specific states. At the same time, the concept of ‘statecraft’ enjoys significantly less purchase than one might expect.⁸ It sometimes seems slightly musty, if not downright anachronistic, in part because the field has expanded its focus beyond the behavior of states.⁹ Yet even the scholarship that focuses on state action—whether coercion, diplomacy, sanctions, propaganda, economic inducements, or alliances—does not make much use of the term. There is currently no robust ‘statecraft’ research program in the field. Put differently, we study statecraft all the time, but usually in fragmented and partial ways.¹⁰

We argue that scholars of statecraft usefully center their focus on the tools of foreign policy, yet they do not go far enough in analyzing how the *processes* of statecraft shape the international system. They should take a cue from the growing relational-processual literature in international relations theory¹¹ and explore how modes and practices of statecraft shape key outcomes. Furthermore, we need to treat episodes of statecraft as dynamic interactions among two or more states that help structure their relations. In short, scholars should reconceive of statecraft in terms of

repertoires: as ‘limited ensembles of mutual claims-making routines available to particular pairs of identities’.¹² An emphasis on repertoires sheds light on how statecraft can shape patterns of technological innovation, the construction of institutional and normative orders, and the pathways through which states mobilize power in world politics. The upshot is that patterns of statecraft are not simply the byproduct of structural conditions, but processes that can remake and refashion the structure of world politics in profound and unexpected ways.

The Instruments of Power: International Relations Theory and Statecraft

The primary concern of the study of statecraft is the instruments and logics of interstate power politics: the range of tools that state leaders can employ to influence others in the international system—to make their friends and enemies behave in ways that they would have otherwise not. We differentiate between instruments and logics because states can use a variety of different power resources in similar ways. The broad logic of deterrence remains similar whether the instrument for imposing costs on the target involves economic sanctions or aerial bombardment. Instruments can be disaggregated into myriad specific resources or forms of capital, but following Harold Lasswell,¹³ we classify the techniques of statecraft into four categories of instruments:

Military force. Defined as instruments of statecraft that rely on weapons and violence. The most obvious examples of military instruments involve the direct use of, or the threat to, ‘directly deploy, the means of warfare against a target’.¹⁴ These may range from large-scale conventional forces, to limited conventional strikes, to nuclear weapons, and ‘also include arms sales, defense pacts, access agreements, or any other mode of influence rooted’ in military power.¹⁵

Economic instruments. States enjoy access to a wide range of techniques to translate their economic capital into social power over others. Trade sanctions probably constitute the most commonly studied economic instrument of statecraft: ‘the deliberate withdraw of normal trade or financial relations for foreign policy purposes’.¹⁶ But states can also make use of other economic incentives and punishments to increase their influence, for example, providing financial assistance, increasing or restricting capital flow, creating regional trade agreements, forming currency unions, providing debt forgiveness, and the like.¹⁷

Diplomatic instruments. We can think of diplomatic statecraft as techniques that draw from the ‘stock of social and political capital—including that embodied in specific individuals—accumulated through cross-boundary interactions’.¹⁸ The study of diplomatic statecraft may include attention to variation in diplomatic styles, such as why leaders might adopt more competitive or collaborative modes of diplomatic statecraft,¹⁹ or why states might choose covert or secret diplomacy.²⁰ Work on diplomatic statecraft can also study individuals—why certain actors seem better able to translate their state’s capacity into influence at the bargaining table.

Cultural instruments. Lasswell included propaganda as an instrument of statecraft. Stacie Goddard and Daniel Nexon subsume it under ‘cultural’ and ‘symbolic’ instruments. These might be acts of statecraft designed to affect the distribution of status. Project Apollo, for example, was designed to enhance American status,²¹ as was Wilhelmine Germany’s demand for battleships.²² Symbolic instruments of statecraft include propaganda, ideological persuasion, and so forth.

Much early post-1945 scholarship on statecraft assumed that, in international politics, military force constitutes the most important—and determinative—instrument of statecraft. This finds expression

in E. H. Carr's venerable observation that 'the supreme importance of the military instrument lies in the fact that the *ultima ratio* of power in international relations is war'.²³ For much of the twentieth century, the study of statecraft qua statecraft fell squarely in the classical realist tradition, with scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and Alexander George, cautioning leaders to behave prudently in world politics, to recognize military force as the dominant mode of statecraft, and not to allow the tools of propaganda and ideology to distort the national interest.²⁴ The prominence of structural realism in the 1980s reinforced this focus on military instruments—at least within realist theory.²⁵ This did not mean, necessarily, that scholars reduced statecraft entirely to military capabilities. Some realists, for example, recognized that states vary in their capacity to extract military power from their societies.²⁶ Others—notably Thomas Schelling, Robert Jervis, and Janice Stein—focused on how state leaders carefully signaled their intentions, resolve, and capabilities in order to influence others' behavior.²⁷

But in the later 1980s—especially as the Cold War waned—some began to forcefully argue that realist theory, and other approaches in its orbit, suffered from a too-long neglect of non-military instruments of statecraft.²⁸ Rather than reduce statecraft to military might, it must be approached in multidimensional terms. Statecraft involves not only the application of various instruments, but also their interaction, to 'achieve the multiple objectives of states, including national security, economic prosperity, and political prestige and influence'.²⁹ Efforts to enhance a state's relative power and influence through the use of—and on the terrain of—wealth, legitimation, diplomatic ties, and other non-military resources often amount to much more than 'routine diplomatic friction'.³⁰ Non-military instruments lie at the core of statecraft. Moreover, even the study of military force needs—as scholars from different traditions emphasize—to take into account the interplay of instruments, as even the use of force requires legitimation.³¹ More broadly, states deploy norms,³² utilize

propaganda,³³ engage in diplomacy,³⁴ and use other non-military instruments to affect the balance of military capabilities.

The call to expand the instruments of statecraft also reflected a line of thinking that a variety of factors—from economic interdependence to the spread of multilateral institutions—were transforming the efficacy and availability of various tools of statecraft. In the 1970s, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argued that the world was shifting from one that approximated realist anarchy to one better characterized by complex interdependence.³⁵ This reduced the utility of military instruments and enhanced the importance of statecraft that leverages asymmetric economic interdependencies among states.³⁶

Recent work on statecraft has identified four additional shifts in the international system that has transformed the toolkits states can use to pursue their interests. First, many scholars argue that *technological innovations* in the international system have altered statecraft by, for example, making large-scale applications of military force much more risky and much more costly for great powers than in prior eras.³⁷ Some contend that the First and Second World Wars demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of major-power war, and even during the Cold War, the statecraft surrounding the use of conventional force had moved away from direct great-power confrontation toward deterrence. A related argument holds that the dawn of the nuclear age created a revolution in statecraft, where ‘large-scale violence is no longer a viable tool of statecraft’.³⁸ States would now search for ways in which they could use limited applications of force to signal their resolve, or to practice brinkmanship during a crisis. It also meant that leaders of great powers would try to keep the use of military statecraft confined to the ‘periphery’ of world politics, or to engage in covert, rather than overt, applications of military force.³⁹

Second, numerous scholars point to how changes in international institutions and regimes—the ‘implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which

actors' expectations converge⁷—have transformed the context in which statecraft takes place.⁴⁰ These changes reflected a culmination of processes that had been underway since at least the nineteenth century. The emergence of Concert institutions after the Napoleonic wars altered how European powers both used military force and practiced diplomacy: calling for a congress to address territorial conflict became a routine tool of statecraft in nineteenth-century politics. The creation of the League of Nations after the First World War likewise sought to constrain the deployment of military force to an act of collective security. Today, many analysts point to the creation of the 'liberal world order'—the collection of rules and institutions governing international politics built primarily, but not exclusively, by the United States following the Second World War—as producing the profound shifts in the tools of statecraft.⁴¹ In the strong version of this argument, the growth of trade and financial institutions have made economic tools—whether used in persuasive or coercive ways—the most efficacious instruments of statecraft. The weaker version of the argument accepts that military force remains fungible, but points to shifts in how states use it. In general, states eschew unilateral uses of force. Instead, they seek to work through—or at least try to work through—the institutional procedures of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) before deploying military force. Even if they bypass the UNSC or ignore its decisions, its very presence affects the tools of statecraft, providing opportunities for opponents to make the use of force more costly.⁴²

Third, a number of scholars argue that changes in international norms have also shifted the tools of statecraft, both by affecting the instruments that states use and the logics of how they use them. Finnemore chronicles how norms changed around various purposes of military intervention.⁴³ For example, great powers once seized customs houses from weaker states in order to collect outstanding international debts, but this practice has dropped out of the statecraft toolkit. The spread of more liberal norms involving multilateralism and human rights means that the 'legitimate' use of force now involves invoking a particular set of established norms, such as the right to self-

defence, or emerging norms, such as the ‘responsibility to protect’.⁴⁴ We have also seen shifts in norms and practices surrounding economic sanctions. A growing number of specialists view the indiscriminate use of sanctions to hurt a civilian population as not only an ineffective but inhumane way to wield economic might. Broad-based sanctions remain an important tool of statecraft, but states and international institutions have turned increasingly to ‘targeted sanctions’ that seek to make elites experience most of the ‘pain’ of sanctions.⁴⁵

Finally, changes in what we might call the ‘social bases of power’ have produced major shifts in the practice of statecraft.⁴⁶ These are often related to technological change—narrowly construed—but extend to social technologies and beyond. All of the instruments of statecraft—military, economic, diplomatic, information, and so on—require that states mobilize and extract resources from populations under their control. Changes in social organization thus necessarily place constraints on and create opportunities for new forms of statecraft. At the beginning of the twentieth century, both increasing nationalism and militarism allowed states to mobilize their entire populations during war.⁴⁷ In contrast, the United States now relies on debt to finance its capital-intensive conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴⁸ At the start of the twentieth century, the diffusion of industrialization and bureaucratization meant that more states were able to field large-scale armies and practice related forms of military statecraft. At the beginning of this century, in contrast, some argue that the gap between post-industrial and industrial societies means only a few states can hope to achieve a dominant position with respect to arms races and coercive diplomacy.⁴⁹ Others argue that the diffusion of new instruments—precision-guided munitions, drones, cyber-operations, and the like—will help even the playing field.⁵⁰

Drawing together all of these changes, some scholars paint a picture of states moving towards what might call a *liberal mode of statecraft*. In such a world, leaders prefer diplomatic and economic instruments; military statecraft moves to the background or is mostly deployed only in the

‘periphery’ of international politics. This generates geopolitical spaces where the process of statecraft seems more institutionalized and transparent, as well as less geared towards zero-sum competition for power and influence.⁵¹ Many contest this account, of course, questioning whether economic tools have actually supplanted military tools in the practice of international statecraft. Most agree, however, that the dominant modes of statecraft vary in different regions and issue areas.

Despite their disagreements, participants in these debates associate changes in the toolkit of statecraft with structural shifts in the international system or in domestic settings. Whether we think that anarchy renders military instruments the most important ones for statecraft, believe that complex interdependence reduces the utility of military tools in favor of economic ones, or hold that the leaders’ statecraft is largely a function of national capabilities, scholars treat statecraft as a product—an outcome—of environmental conditions. While scholarship on norms and variation in statecraft allows for agents to influence normative structures, the causal arrow is essentially the same: intersubjective norms prescribe and proscribe the use of particular tools of statecraft.⁵²

Statecraft as Repertoires — Putting the Toolkit First

The approaches discussed above all offer explanatory and analytical leverage on matters of statecraft. Like ‘power politics’, of which it is a subset,⁵³ we contend that statecraft ought to be treated ‘as an object of analysis in its own right’.⁵⁴ Statecraft is constitutive of the texture of world politics; existing toolkits of statecraft shape technological innovation, the development of institutional and normative orders, the degree of economic and political interdependence, and the capacity for states to mobilize difference sources of power international politics.

Doing so also opens up the possibility that innovations in the tools of statecraft emerge endogenously: through processes of conflictual and cooperative interaction among states. Statecraft always involves at least two actors; they frequently adjust their statecraft as they interact with one

another. This means that new tools, whether instruments or their logics of deployment, may emerge from the deliberate choices or the improvisations of at least one of the parties involved. Tools of statecraft may be ‘imported’ from international settings into domestic ones, such in the case of counter-insurgency techniques being adapted to, and incorporated into, domestic statecraft.⁵⁵ The direction may also go the other way, such as when authoritarian regimes take techniques of disruption and control that they developed to deal with domestic opposition and apply them abroad.⁵⁶

To capture these kinds of dynamics, we can apply to statecraft the conceptual apparatus developed to study repertoires of contention. Repertoires are ‘limited ensembles of mutual claims-making routines available to particular pairs of identities’.⁵⁷ A repertoire involves ‘not only what people *do* when they are engaged in conflict with others but what *they know how to do* and what others expect them to do’.⁵⁸ Charles Tilly and others formulated the concept of repertoires to analyze the conventions that allowed actors to mobilize and to make collective claims. Marches, demonstrations, and petitions are all examples of the repertoires of contentious politics. These repertoires include not only the broad techniques of contention, but also associated scripts for what actions to take in light of how agents of the state respond.

We can think about ‘statecraft’ as a set of repertoires. States enjoy, in theory, an infinite or at least a very broad range of tools—ways of combining different instruments with different logics, and of mixing them together. They may, for example, mobilize their military forces, conquer their neighbors, muster alliances, impose sanctions, ‘name and shame,’ or petition international bodies. But at any particular time, we find more limited toolkits—repertoires—in use, whether by particular states, in relations among specific states, or in specific settings. Calling a diplomatic congress to resolve a crisis was common sense in the early nineteenth century. By that century’s end, repertoires of statecraft were shifting away from the use of that tool. Relevant scripts dropped out completely,

only to have some of their elements resurface in the use of multilateral forums and other related tools of statecraft, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Along the same lines, joint military exercises were a relatively rare event prior to the Cold War. During the decades long period of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, however, they became an essential part of the repertoire for reassuring allies and bolstering the credibility of extended deterrence. Repertoires associated with multilateral intervention—and the tool itself—have likewise evolved from peace-keeping models, which focus on monitoring and enforcing ceasefires, to peace-enforcement models, which include imposing settlements and disarming potential spoilers. In essence, state leaders do not simply pull the instruments of statecraft from thin air. Rather, they and other ‘political actors follow rough scripts to uncertain outcomes as they negotiate’ diplomatic demands, trade relations, territorial disputes, and other political concerns.⁵⁹ Statecraft, then, is composed of a set of ‘repertoires of power politics’.

This approach to statecraft intersects with growing interest among International Relations (IR) scholars in ‘practices’: the ‘socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world’.⁶⁰ It is in the practice-turn literature that we already see scholars adopting this ‘relational-processual’ turn: treating statecraft itself as the object of analysis, asking not how it is that the structure of the international system creates or constrains statecraft, but how a state’s use of tools constitutes the system itself. Some explicitly seek to understand interstate power politics through the lens of practice theory; they treat states as competing for status and position in socially-constructed fields defined by field-relevant capital—including forms of military, economic, diplomatic, and cultural capital.⁶¹ Many focus specifically on diplomatic statecraft as a practice, asking, for example, how practices of multilateral diplomacy can create hierarchical relations among states.⁶² Others work with cognate ideas to study how legal practices have infused

contemporary diplomacy,⁶³ and how diplomatic practices have moved from processes of representing states to the more ambitious practice of governing international relations.⁶⁴ Moreover, in conducting statecraft, repertoires appear across multiple levels of analysis—among officials, between governments and peoples, and among states themselves.⁶⁵

Like practice theory, a focus on repertoires places processes of interaction at the center of the analysis of statecraft. But repertoires are more strategic than ‘practices’. They are a ‘tool kit of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action’’.⁶⁶ Repertoires, like practices, are embedded in ‘existing web of social relations and understandings among parties to the interaction’.⁶⁷ The improvisational nature of repertoires of statecraft matters a great deal. At the very least, it means that repertoires are always in the process of incremental variation and change. Just as no two performances of Bach sound exactly alike, so too does every enactment of a repertoire of statecraft vary, even if ever so slightly. Practices are akin to ‘strong or rigid repertoires’ that require ‘great embedding of contention in previously existing history, culture, and social relations’.⁶⁸ The existing set of material and social relations can vary in its density; as a result, interstate interaction may be characterized by repertoires that follow weakly predictable scripts. At the extreme, we might see radical improvisation within repertoires: the creation of new repertoires from existing ones, or the deployment of old repertoires in new temporal spaces, which can fundamentally shift the practice of statecraft in international politics.

These circumstances may be less common in the contemporary period than in prior eras, where politics sometimes lacked histories of interaction before engaging in power-political competition or cooperation. Repertoires of statecraft may become more improvisational and less settled, however, for a variety of reasons. The Trump presidency has destabilized existing repertoires in American relations with many of its partners and allies. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, the United States and its NATO allies improvised (out of established

practices) a particular combination of tools designed to deter Russia from aggression against the Baltic States and place pressure on Moscow to halt or reverse its activities in the rest of Ukraine. Of course, Russia deployed a variety of well-rehearsed tools, including the creation of frozen conflicts. But it also stepped up the use of specific Cold War tools, such as violations of the airspace of western states and simulating nuclear strikes. Precisely because these tools seemed anachronistic to many NATO allies and partners, they produced some degree of improvisation and experimentation in the repertoires of statecraft that have come to characterize their relations with Moscow. This was, in turn, met with a ramping up of the use of other tools of statecraft designed to fragment and undermine western cohesion. In general, we argue that a focus on repertoires can help deepen and enrich the study of statecraft in a variety of ways.

Repertoires and technological change

One area where repertoires matter is in discussion of the role of technological change and statecraft. Conventional approaches suggest that technological innovations have the potential to fundamentally shift the utility of force in statecraft. Approaching statecraft through the lens of repertoires turns this analysis on its head, asking how it is that the available scripts of statecraft can shape technological innovation in world politics. It begins with what scholars of technological innovation have long argued: studies of innovation cannot be technologically determinist, reducing change to shifts in material technology.⁶⁹ Instead, innovation occurs within a set of existing practices, which give meaning to technological change, making some change more significant than others, as well as indicating how new technologies can be used in politics. Changes in military technology, for example, are filtered through existing doctrines and military cultures.⁷⁰ Processes of innovation are not exogenous to statecraft, but are intimately bound up in its practices.

Many scholars accept that the statecraft of ‘mutual assured destruction’ between the United States and Soviet Union, for example, was not a given—a direct offshoot of the invention of nuclear

weapons. The lens of repertoires helps us to understand why the early Cold War was marked by intense nuclear crises, but that pattern altered after 1962.⁷¹ In the first decade of nuclear statecraft, the United States and Soviet Union folded nuclear technology into existing repertoires of great-power competition. One of the powers would seek to expand their influence through traditional scripts of great power politics—moving military forces into Eastern Europe, arming or threatening to arm an ally, and so forth. The other power would deploy a counter-script of resistance and resolve, whether an airlift or a blockade. It was only in 1962, following the Berlin and Cuban Missile Crises, that Washington and Moscow abandoned these scripts of direct great-power competition, and moved the statecraft of nuclear competition towards deterrence and more competitive politics into the periphery. In essence, it took over a decade for the United States and Soviet Union to develop a relatively stable statecraft of deterrence.

Starting with repertoires allows scholar to think about contemporary technological innovation in statecraft as well. Long before Facebook, WeChat, and Twitter, states relied on propaganda and what we might call repertoires of social disruption. Propaganda campaigns are often not meant to persuade, but to foment division in an opponent's population, with the goal of increasing social fragmentation and preventing balancing behavior. These scripts are long-standing features of diplomacy itself. For example, Bismarck relied on propaganda to disrupt Palmerston and Russell's attempts to mobilize British support against Prussia's expansion in the 1860s. On the heels of Pearl Harbor, US intelligence worried that Japan was infiltrating and organizing African Americans, using racial divisions to undermine America's ability to fight.⁷²

From this vantage point, the technology of social media has been folded into, and enhanced, the existing repertoires of social disruption. Vladimir Putin's Russia has used this script to considerable effect. Russia's strategy has long relied on a variety of tactics aimed at undermining the American alliance system and shoring up its patron-client relations.⁷³ Social media provides Russia

with new instruments to identify and target fragmented populations, to feed them disrupting information more directly, and isolate audiences from competing claims. However novel the technology, the script of disruption, as well as the exploitation of social divisions, is a well-worn part of great power statecraft.

Repertoires and Order: Scripts, Institutions, and Norms

Putting the toolkit first, and analyzing the dynamic and interactive repertoires of statecraft, also gives international relations theorists new ways to think about how states order their relations in world politics. As argued above, theorists have put ‘order’ first when thinking about statecraft. Many begin with anarchy, with institutions, or with norms and then ask how this creates opportunities to use some techniques of statecraft and restrains others. In contrast, adopting a repertoires approach highlights that all international orders are constituted as much by practical statecraft as they are by formal structures. International orders, like all structures, are not ontologically distinct from practice: it is through statecraft that order is created, persists, and can be transformed. We can only study the texture of international systems by studying statecraft itself.

Approaching order as constituted by statecraft, rather than the other way around, matters for three reasons. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is that robust power political orders can exist without formal institutions and be maintained through regularized patterns of statecraft itself. Indeed, as Stanley Hoffmann suggested decades ago, the institutionalization and formalization of orders is as likely to reflect a *weak* international order as a strong one: only in weak orders do actors need to write down and formally agree on the ‘rules of the road’.⁷⁴ Consider the Concert of Europe, which both historians and IR theorists take as a robust international order.⁷⁵ The Concert was ordered, not primarily through its institutions, but through its statecraft: leaders of European states consistently harnessed and deployed the repertoires of the Concert in pursuit of their own interests.

Most of these revolved around repertoires of ‘balance-of-power’ politics. Leaders could settle disputes through the exchange of territory, for example. They could reconfigure their alliance partners. Most notably, they could call a diplomatic congress to settle their disputes. The Concert, in other words, was not a static set of institutions. It was an order in motion, its practices consistently contested and redefined through the statecraft of its members.⁷⁶

Second, a focus on repertoires captures how statecraft constructs not a singular but a plurality of international orders at any particular moment. Repertoires of statecraft are embedded within interactions; because international interactions differ in their frequency, density, and content, this suggests that there will be multiple orders within the international system at any given time. In the contemporary international system, statecraft differs across geographic space—relations within the Western security order, for example, differ from relations among the United States and its Asian partners—producing different repertoires of security.⁷⁷ Repertoires also vary across issue areas. The statecraft that defines the global ‘economic order’ differs from that which comprises the ‘security order’. In the first, interactions are dense, and relatively symmetric among a defined set of powers. Repertoires in this issue space include multilateralism, consultation and coordination, among others. In the security realm, interactions are often hierarchical, exclusive, and ties are asymmetric. Repertoires in this area include reassurance, restraint, mobilization and demobilization, among others. This does not mean that these orders are hermetically sealed. Repertoires can migrate from one to the other, although often in unintended and discordant ways.

Third, a focus on repertoires allows us to get around what, we think, is an unproductive contemporary debate about whether ‘liberal’ statecraft has supplanted and constrained power politics. There have been unending discussions about whether Washington—at least before 2016—genuinely embraced a liberal form of statecraft. While Washington’s support of the liberal order suggested a fundamental shift, its military interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, for

example, suggest a continued American emphasis on military might.⁷⁸ We consider this argument between liberals and realists as unproductive. From a repertoires perspective, the question is not the extent to which liberal institutions and norms have changed an actor's statecraft. A more interesting starting point for analysis is how American statecraft—even its use of force—became ordered around a set of repertoires, as well as the extent to which the strategic use of repertoires reinforces or undercuts the international order. The intervention in Kosovo might not have been institutionally 'legal,' but American statecraft here centered around institutional procedures and 'legitimate' norms. The intervention itself was a multilateral, NATO operation. The reasons given for the intervention—the ending of an ethnic conflict, the protection of civilians—reflected liberal norms, rather than American national interests. Even in Iraq, US behavior suggested liberal repertoires: its attempts to build a multilateral coalition; its decision to wait for a report on weapons of mass destruction from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the UNSC. In essence, in these cases, the United States adopted a statecraft that both pursued its interests and oriented its actions around a familiar set of liberal repertoires.

Repertoires and the Mobilization of Power

Lastly, analyzing statecraft as a set of power-political repertoires requires a re-conceptualization of the relationship between power attributes on the one hand and the instruments of foreign policy on the other. Many scholars treat statecraft primarily as a reflection of different forms of power, and argue that variation in these bases of power will create shifts in the instruments of statecraft. Military instruments will be more or less useful depending on the size of a state's population, its technological capacity, its geography, and so forth. Whether economic instruments are deployed similarly depends on a state's production, trade, and financial assets. The instruments of statecraft are primarily designed to translate power attributes into influence. They are an *output* of power resources.

Using a repertoires approach, in contrast, draws attention to how the practice of statecraft not only reflects but creates power, either by mobilizing one's own power resources or by demobilizing the resources of others. Here it is useful to return to the literature on contentious politics. In social movements, repertoires are critical for collective mobilization, providing actors with scripts that guide how they might mobilize their own power, and counter the power of the state. As Tilly argues, repertoires enable collective action, and allow actors to engage in contentious politics. It is the availability of shared repertoires that allows individuals to come together in protest, to build barricades, break windows, or march on town hall. The same is true when exercising power in international politics. To wield influence over others also involves collective mobilization, either within a state's own boundaries, or across political communities or demobilizing the capacity of collective action by potential rivals. And to put it simply, all of this requires scripts that guide how actors engage in these activities.

Consider the repertoires associated with economic sanctions. On the one hand, we can think about economic sanctions in a conventional sense, as a reflection of a state's capacity for economic coercion: sanctions will be successful when a state has the capacity to use its own trade and financial capital to hurt that of another country. But in international politics, sanctions are also designed to mobilize collective action among states. Sanctions involve a coercive repertoire that states understand, collectively, how to 'perform,' and thus becomes a focal point for collective action. Sanctions are also a 'legitimate' tool of coercion, one with broad resonance across states. When a state calls for the international community to enact sanctions, this is more than a reflection of power. It is collective mobilization of a political community. The use of sanctions can be politically useful, in other words, whether or not they 'succeed' or 'fail' as instrument of coercion.⁷⁹

We see similar dynamics in diplomatic, symbolic, and even military instruments of statecraft. Conducting diplomacy in multilateral institutions is not merely about building broad support for a foreign policy; it is a repertoire of diplomacy that has widespread resonance, and thus creates the foundation for joint action across different political communities. Likewise, when states make nationalist appeals, they are not merely *reflecting* the social power of their political communities; they are actively *mobilizing* and at times even *creating* identities as the basis for power and influence. Large-scale military exercises between allies are a form of statecraft designed to mobilize joint military power, quite literally by enhancing command, control, and communications, but also symbolically by demonstrating the combined capacity of the allied states. In each of these cases, statecraft is no simply instrument. Without statecraft, power cannot be wielded in the name of expanded influence. The repertoires of statecraft are what makes collective action possible, both within and across states, and thus lies at the heart of power politics.

Conclusion

The study of statecraft has come far in the last century. It began with a strong normative tilt, a focus on military force, and an emphasis on the ‘great men’ of statecraft—the Richelieus, Bismarcks, and Roosevelts. By the end of the century, the study of statecraft became a vibrant site of contestation in the field, with scholars calling for a more expansive study of the instruments of influence in world politics. And in the last fifteen years, the study of statecraft has become critical to assess debates about the origins, content, and durability of the liberal international order.

Our charge here is less a critical one than a call to go further in placing the processes of statecraft at the center of the study of international relations. By focusing on statecraft as a set of repertoires, we can debate less about which instruments matter, and study all instruments—military, economic, diplomatic, and symbolic—as necessary tools of power politics. By placing repertoires front and center in analysis, we open up new questions about how repertoires of statecraft shape fundamental drivers of international politics—whether technological innovation, order building, or the mobilization of collective communities—in a way that transcends traditional debates about the dynamics of global politics.

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Notes

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³ It may also take the form of ethical and normative arguments about the legitimacy of specific forms of statecraft, such as in debates about the set of circumstances that justify military intervention, the ethics of broad-based sanctions that punish ordinary citizens, and the legitimacy of the use of drones to kill suspected terrorists. We largely set this dimension of the academic study of statecraft aside. See, for example, Amy E. Eckert, ‘The Responsibility to Protect in the Anarchical

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