



Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework

Author(s): Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Sep., 1963), pp. 632-642

Published by: [American Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952568>

Accessed: 30/09/2012 18:52

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Political Science Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Political Science Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

DECISIONS AND NONDECISIONS: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

PETER BACHRACH AND MORTON S. BARATZ

Bryn Mawr College

In recent years a rich outpouring of case studies on community decision-making has been combined with a noticeable lack of generalizations based on them. One reason for this is a commonplace: we have no general theory, no broad-gauge model in terms of which widely different case studies can be systematically compared and contrasted.

Among the obstacles to the development of such a theory is a good deal of confusion about the nature of power and of the things that differentiate it from the equally important concepts of force, influence, and authority. These terms have different meanings and are of varying relevance; yet in nearly all studies of community decision-making published to date, power and influence are used almost interchangeably, and force and authority are neglected.¹ The researchers thereby handicap themselves. For they utilize concepts which are at once too broadly and too narrowly drawn: too broadly, because important distinctions between power and influence are brushed over; and too narrowly, because other concepts are disregarded—concepts which, had they been brought to bear, might have altered the findings radically.

Many investigators have also mistakenly assumed that power and its correlatives are activated and can be observed only in decision-making situations. They have overlooked the equally, if not more important area of what might be called “nondecision-making”, *i.e.*, the practice of limiting the scope of actual decision-making to “safe” issues by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, and political institutions and procedures. To pass over this is to neglect one whole “face” of power.²

Finally, the case studies are often based upon inarticulate, perhaps unsound, premises which predetermine the findings of “fact.”³ A variety

of complex factors affect decision-making—the social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds of the individual participants; the values of the decision-making body as an entity in itself; the pressures brought to bear on the decision-makers, individually and collectively, by groups at interest; and so on. To say, as some do, that these factors are equally important is as far from the mark as it is to assume, as others do, that only one is of overriding significance.⁴

What is required, then, is a model in terms of which the determinants both of decision- and nondecision-making can be appraised, taking full account of the distinct concepts of power, force, influence, and authority. In this paper we are not so ambitious. We attempt only to lay some of the groundwork for a model, seeking (1) to clarify the attributes of what we consider key concepts for any study of decision- and nondecision-making and the essential differences among them, and (2) to show how these concepts can be utilized more systematically and effectively in case studies.

I

It is customary to say that this or that person or group “has power,” the implication being that power, like wealth, is a possession which enables its owner to secure some apparent future Good.⁵ Another way of expressing the same point of view is to say that power is a “simple property . . . which can belong to a person or group considered in itself.”⁶

For at least three reasons this usage is unacceptable. First, it fails to distinguish clearly between power over people and power over matter; and “power in the political [or economic or social] sense cannot be conceived as the ability to produce intended effects in

¹ See, *e.g.*, Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure* (Chapel Hill, 1953); and Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven, 1961).

² Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Two Faces of Power,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56 (December 1962), pp. 947–52. A somewhat similar view, arrived at independently, may be found in Thomas J. Anton, “Power, Pluralism, and Local Politics,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (March 1963), p. 453.

³ See Bachrach and Baratz, *op. cit.*, pp. 947, 952.

⁴ Cf. Peter Rossi, “Community Decision-Making,” in Roland Young (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Politics* (Evanston, Ill., 1958), p. 359.

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, as paraphrased by C. J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Politics* (New York, 1937), p. 12.

⁶ Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven, 1950), p. 75, draw this implication from the definition of power, *i.e.*, “the production of intended effects,” in Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (New York, 1938), p. 35.

general, but only such effects as involve other persons. . . .”⁷ Second, the view that a person’s power is measured by the total number of desires that he achieves is erroneous; one cannot have power in a vacuum, but only in relation to someone else. Third and most important, the common conception of the phenomenon mistakenly implies that possession of (what appear to be) the instruments of power is tantamount to possession of power itself. Such a notion is false because it ignores the fundamental relational attribute of power: that it cannot be possessed; that, to the contrary, the successful exercise of power is dependent upon the relative importance of conflicting values *in the mind of the recipient* in the power relationship.

A few illustrations should clarify and enlarge our position. Imagine, first, an armed military sentry who is approached by an unarmed man in uniform. The sentry levels his gun at the intruder and calls out, “Halt or I’ll shoot!” The order is promptly obeyed. Did the sentry therefore have power and exercise it? So it would seem; but appearances could be deceiving. For suppose that the intruder obeyed, not because he felt compelled to do so in the face of the threatened sanction, but because he was himself a trained soldier for whom prompt obedience to a sentry’s order was part of a system of values he fully accepted.⁸ If that was the case, there was no conflict of goals or interests between the two principals; the sentry’s threatened sanction was irrelevant, and the result would have been the same if he, and not the intruder, had been unarmed. Because the soldier put obedience to a sentry’s order at the top of his schedule of values, the threat of severe deprivations had no bearing on his behavior. In such circumstances it cannot be said that the guard exerted power.

Let us now suppose that a second man approaches the sentry and, like the first, is ordered to stop or be shot. But the second stranger ignores the order, attempts to smash through the gate, and is forthwith fatally wounded. If we assume that the intruder’s intention was to sabotage the military installation, we can have no doubt that his and the sentry’s values were in direct conflict. Even so, the sentry’s fatal shot did *not* constitute an exercise of power. For it did not bring about compliance to his order—and it did not because, apparently, the intruder valued entry to the base more highly

than either obedience to the sentry’s order or his own wellbeing.

Suppose, finally, that a third man approaches the sentry box, a man who wants to die but cannot bring himself to the act of self-destruction. He therefore deliberately ignores the sentry’s command and is duly shot to death. Did someone in this situation have power and exercise it? As we see it, the “victim” did—for it was he, cognizant of the conflict of values between himself and the guard, who utilized the latter’s supposed sanction to achieve his own objective.⁹

We reiterate that power is relational, as opposed to possessive or substantive. Its relational characteristics are threefold. First, in order for a power relation to exist there must be a conflict of interests or values between two or more persons or groups. Such a divergence is a necessary condition of power because, as we have suggested, if A and B are in agreement as to ends, B will freely assent to A’s preferred course of action; in which case the situation will involve authority rather than power.¹⁰ Second, a power relationship exists only if B actually bows to A’s wishes. A conflict of interests is an insufficient condition, since A may not be able to prevail upon B to change his behavior. And if B does not comply, A’s policy will either become a dead letter or will be effectuated through the exercise of force rather than through power.¹¹ Third, a power relation can exist only if one of the parties can threaten to invoke sanctions: power is “the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (. . . threatened) severe deprivations for non-conformity with the policies intended.”¹² It

⁹ It might be argued that the “victim” did not actually exercise power in this instance, because he had no sanctions with which to threaten the sentry. This objection misses the obvious point: the “victim” threatened the guard with severe deprivations (dishonor, imprisonment) if the guard did not perform his soldierly duty by complying with the “victim’s” command that he (the “victim”) be killed.

¹⁰ See part IV below.

¹¹ See part II below.

¹² Lasswell and Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 76. We have deleted “actual or” from the parenthetical expression because *actual* deprivation for nonconformity is a property of force, rather than power. This point is discussed further below.

The Lasswell-Kaplan definition is open to another criticism. They observe (p. 77) that “to have power is to be taken into account in others’ acts (policies).” Strictly construed, this must mean that any and every person or group in-

⁷ Lasswell and Kaplan, *loc. cit.*

⁸ Agreement based upon reason represents another kind of interpersonal relationship—authority—which is discussed below.

must be stressed, however, that while the availability of sanctions—that is, of any promised reward or penalty by which an actor can maintain effective control over policy—is a necessary condition of power, it is not sufficient. It is necessary simply because the threat of sanctions is what differentiates power from influence¹³; it is insufficient because the availability of a sanction endows A with power over B only if the following conditions are met:

(a) The person threatened is aware of what is expected of him. In a power situation there must be clear communication between the person who initiates policy and the person who must comply.¹⁴ If our imaginary sentry challenges a man who understands no English or is perhaps deaf, the sentry has—at least at the moment he issues his order—no power. In other words, power has a rational attribute: for it to exist, the person threatened must comprehend the alternatives which face him in choosing between compliance and noncompliance.

(b) The threatened sanction is *actually* regarded as a deprivation by the person who is so threatened. A threat by the President to “purge” a Congressman for failure to support the Administration’s legislative program would

involved—in whatever degree—in decision-making must have power. For is not the farmer who markets .001 percent of the total supply of wheat “taken into account” by other buyers and sellers in just the same sense—though not, of course, in the same degree—as is the General Motors Corporation in the determination of automobile prices? Or, to change the illustration, is it not the case that, in the literal interpretation of the word, nonvoters as well as voters “participate,” and therefore have power, in deciding close elections? We should think so. But if this is what is meant by power, how can we avoid concluding that no matter where we look, we shall always find that power is broadly diffused? To rephrase, if (a) we analyze the distribution of power solely in terms of decision-making and (b) we ascribe power to all who participate in whatever measure or with whatever “weight” (“The weight of power is the degree of participation in the making of decisions . . .” [*Ibid.*], then (c) do we not necessarily prejudge that power in real-world situations will be widely dispersed? For further discussion of this general question, see Bacharach and Baratz, *op. cit.*

¹³ See part III below.

¹⁴ See Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York, 1960), p. 21. Compare Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 38–9.

be to no avail if the Congressman reckoned that his chances for reelection would be increased rather than reduced by Presidential intervention.

(c) The person threatened has greater esteem for the value which would be sacrificed should he disobey than for another value which would be foregone should he comply. Fear of physical injury did not deter those Southern Negro “sitters-in” who put greater store by the righteousness of their cause. It is worth noting at this stage that threatened deprivations are often ineffectual because the policy-initiator, in deciding what sanction to invoke, mistakenly projects his own values into the minds of his subjects.¹⁵

(d) The person threatened is persuaded that the threat against him is not idle, that his antagonist would not hesitate *in fine* actually to impose sanctions. To illustrate, if a famous general calculates that the President lacks the will or the popular support to employ his Constitutional prerogatives, he may ignore—even defy—the President’s policy instructions.¹⁶ Or, again, the success of a resistance movement based on the principle of nonviolence rests in large measure upon the assumption that those who can invoke sanctions will refrain from doing so, that value conflicts within A will prevent him from carrying out his threat against B. In point are the Indians who sat on the rail-

¹⁵ This error, compounded by that of regarding power as something which is possessed, may well have underlain the policy of the United States toward Chiang Kai-Shek during the period (1944–49) of the Chinese civil war. It is entirely possible, that is to say, that in providing substantial amounts of armament to the Kuomintang regime, we mistook the instruments of power for power itself; and, in addition, by interpreting the Kuomintang-Communist struggle in terms of our own values, we utterly misread the temper of the great majority of the Chinese people.

The abortive invasion of Cuba in April 1961 is perhaps another example of the inherent dangers in projecting our values onto a populace holding a different collection of interests. Looking at the great body of Cuban nationals who were apparently bereft both of individual freedom and personal dignity, we concluded that we need only provide the opportunity, the spark, which would ignite nationwide uprisings against the Castro regime. But hindsight has indicated how badly we misread popular feeling in Cuba. See Stewart Alsop, “Lessons of the Cuban Disaster,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 24 June 1961, pp. 26–27.

¹⁶ Neustadt, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13. On the general point, see also Schelling, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

road tracks in defiance of the British and got away with it because (as the Indians well knew) the British put a higher value on human life than on obedience to their orders.¹⁷

We can now draw together the several elements of our conception of power. A power relationship exists when (a) there is a conflict over values or course of action between A and B; (b) B complies with A's wishes; and (c) he does so because he is fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he, B, regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by noncompliance.¹⁸

¹⁷ The point is also well illustrated by Franco-American policy differences in the early 1960s. Committed both to the defense of Western Europe and to strict limitation on the number of nations with independent nuclear forces, the United States was caught in a dilemma in its dealings with General de Gaulle. In the words of a contemporary observer, "De Gaulle . . . has played a judo trick on the United States . . . [He] means to fashion his 'European construction,' based on the *force de frappe* and the Franco-German axis and excluding the British and Americans. And he means to do this *under the umbrella of the American nuclear deterrent* . . . there is precious little the Kennedy Administration can do about de Gaulle's judo trick—short of removing its nuclear protection. And this has not even been seriously considered. . . . 'We're a bit like that little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike,' says one Kennedy adviser. Remove the American commitment to defend Europe, and the result is unmitigated disaster, not only to Europe but to the United States. Thus the United States, like the little Dutch boy, is immobilized. The strongest power in the Western alliance has amazingly little bargaining power in the alliance." Stuart Alsop, "Should We Pull Out of Europe?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 April 1963, p. 80. Emphasis in original.

The main point is made more pithily by "President Hudson" in Allen Drury's novel, *A Shade of Difference* (New York, 1962), p. 82: "The more real power you have, the less you can afford to exercise it, and the less real power you have, the more you can throw it around."

For further discussion of the relationship between power and commitment, see E. Abramson *et al.*, "Social Power and Commitment Theory," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 23 (February 1958), pp. 15–22.

¹⁸ With Lasswell and Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 16, we define a value as "a desired event—a goal event. That X values Y means that X acts so as to bring about the consummation of Y."

Several points must be made in reference to this definition. First, in speaking of power relations, one must take care not to overstate the case by saying that A has power over B merely because B, anxious to avoid sanctions, complies with a given policy proclaimed by A. This could well be an inaccurate description of their relationship, since A's power with respect to B may be extremely limited in scope, *i.e.*, in range of values affected.¹⁹ Thus, the power of a traffic policeman over a citizen may be confined to the latter's activities as a motorist—and no more than that. Moreover, in appraising power relationships account must be taken of the weight of power, *i.e.*, the degree to which values are affected, and of its domain, *i.e.*, the number of persons affected.²⁰ For example, the power of the Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means is limited mainly to fiscal affairs; but within this scope he wields immense power in the determination of Federal tax and expenditure policies (weight), which affect a vast number of persons—up to and including at times the President himself (domain).

Finally, account must be taken of what Friedrich has dubbed the "rule of anticipated reactions."²¹ The problem posed by this phenomenon is that an investigation might reveal that, though B regularly accedes to A's preferred courses of action, A in fact lacks power over B because A just as regularly tailors his demands upon B to dimensions he thinks B will accept. As an illustration, if the President submits to the Congress only those bills likely to be palatable to a majority of lawmakers, he can hardly be said to have power over the Congress simply because all his proposals are enacted into law.

II

In Robert Bierstedt's opinion, "force is manifest power . . . Force . . . means the reduction or limitation or closure or even total elimination of alternatives to the social action of one person or group by another person or group. 'Your money or your life' symbolizes a situation of naked force, the reduction of al-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 17–18. A corollary proposition could be called the "rule of *misanticipated reactions*." We refer to a situation in which one person grudgingly conforms to what he *thinks* another wants, but finds after the fact either that he misread the other's preferences or that the latter never intended to invoke sanctions for behavior contrary to his preferences.

ternatives to two."²² Force, in short, is power exercised.

We reject this view. As we see it, the essential difference between power and force is simply that in a power relationship one party obtains another's compliance, while in a situation involving force one's objectives must be achieved, if at all, in the face of *noncompliance*.²³ Thus, if A's demand for B's money or his life prompts B to surrender his wallet, A has exercised power—he has won B's compliance by threat of even more severe deprivations. But if A must kill B to get the money, A has to resort to force—he must actually invoke the threatened sanction—and thereby perhaps expose himself to severer deprivations too. By the same token, if and when thermonuclear weapons are transformed from instruments of a policy of deterrence into activated missiles of death, power will have given way to force.

There is another difference between the two concepts. A person's scope of decision-making is radically curtailed under the duress of force; once the fist, the bullet, or the missile is in flight, the intended victim is stripped of choice between compliance and noncompliance. But where power is being exercised, the individual retains this choice. Put another way, in a power relationship it is B who chooses what to do, while in a force relationship it is A.²⁴

It follows from the foregoing that *manipulation* is an aspect of force, not of power. For, once the subject is in the grip of the manipulator, he has no choice as to course of action. It can be said, therefore, that force and manipulation (as a sub-concept under it) are, in contrast to power, non-rational.

An additional distinguishing attribute of force is that in some circumstances it is non-relational. For instance, if B is shot in the back by an unknown robber, he and his assailant have only a minimal interrelationship—especially when compared to a power confrontation where B must decide whether to accede to A's

²² "An Analysis of Social Power," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 15 (December 1950), p. 733.

²³ A major defect of Lord Russell's conception of power (see above, note 6) is that it utterly ignores this distinction. One can produce an "intended effect" through the exercise of either power or force.

²⁴ It is often true, when force is operative, that A gives B the option to comply with his demands *between* blows. But in such circumstances, should B bend to A's wishes, he does so out of fear of further sanctions, in which case force is transformed into power.

demands. A similarly minimal relationship obtains in cases involving manipulation, where compliance is forthcoming in the absence of recognition on the complier's part either of the source or the exact nature of the demand upon him.

In short, force and manipulation, like power, involve a conflict of values; but unlike power, they are non-rational and tend to be non-relational.

A number of implications may be drawn from this reasoning. One is that the actual application of sanctions is an admission of defeat by the would-be wielder of power. And so it is, to the extent that the prior *threat* of sanctions failed to bring about the desired behavior. A good case in point is the action of President Harry S. Truman in 1951 when he relieved General Douglas MacArthur of his command in the Pacific on grounds of insubordination. By continuing to air in public his policy differences with the Administration, MacArthur virtually compelled Truman to dismiss him. The President's decision to apply sanctions was, however, an admission of defeat, an implicit recognition that he could not, by power or authority, obtain MacArthur's compliance to the Administration's policy of a negotiated settlement of the Korean hostilities. To be sure, policy defeats of this kind may prove to be only partial. For if the resort to force against one party effectively deters noncompliance on the part of others, now or in future, the employment of sanctions becomes a fresh declaration of the existence of power. This is, of course, the rationale of all who undertake punitive actions against others: the *use* of force in one situation increases the credibility of *threats* to use it in others.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that resort to force can result in a loss of power. Two cases can be distinguished. First, the invocation of sanctions often causes a radical reordering of values within the coerced person (as well as in those persons who identify closely with him), thereby undermining the pre-existing power relationship. A good illustration is provided by the largely abortive attempt of the Nazis during World War II to pacify the populations of occupied countries by killing civilian hostages. Contrary to German expectations, this policy produced a marked stiffening of resistance; evidently, the number of "prisoners" who put a higher value on freedom than on life itself rose sharply. Second, the deprivation may prove in retrospect far less severe than it appeared in prospect, as a result of which future noncompliance is not discouraged and may even be encouraged. For

example, a child whose punishment for misbehavior is the temporary loss of a prized toy may find, *ex post facto*, that the loss is entirely bearable, that the satisfactions he gained from acting up are greater at the margin than the alternative foregone. In such circumstances, obviously, future defiance of parental orders is more likely than not.

Just as power may be lessened when force is resorted to, so also may power be lessened when it is successfully exercised, *i.e.*, when compliance is obtained by mere threat of sanctions. As an illustration, Presidents of the United States have traditionally sought to exercise power over recalcitrant Congressmen by withholding patronage. But as a President exchanges a job appointment for votes—that is, as he successfully utilizes this source of power—his reserves for effecting further compliance dry up. As a corollary, repeated threats to invoke sanctions—threats never carried out—will gradually lose credibility in the minds of those threatened, until at length the threats cannot produce the desired behavior. This, in the view of many, was the basic flaw in the implementation of the stated American policy during the late 1950s of “massive retaliation at times and in places of our own choosing.”²⁵ The same phenomenon applies to interpersonal relationships: a threat to withdraw one’s love for another may be highly potent the first time, yet prove totally ineffectual if used again.

III

One person has *influence* over another within a given scope to the extent that the first, without resorting to either a tacit or an overt threat of severe deprivations, causes the second to change his course of action. Thus, power and influence are alike in that each has both rational and relational attributes. But they are different in that the exercise of power depends upon potential sanctions, while the exercise of influence does not. And there is an important difference between influence and manipulation: in situations involving the latter, but not the former, A seeks to disguise the nature and source of his demands upon B and, if A is successful, B is totally unaware that something is being demanded of him.

Although power and influence can and must be distinguished, the line between them is usually difficult to draw. This is especially true where B’s reasons for acting in accordance with

A’s wishes are confused or multiple; in such circumstances B himself will be unable honestly to say whether his behavior was prompted by a fear of sanctions or, rather, by his esteem for “higher” values (*e.g.*, wealth, respect, power, wisdom) than the one immediately at stake. Does the ambitious young man who submits unhappily to the every dictate of his rich uncle do so because he admires wealthy men (influence) or because he feels that unquestioning obedience is the price of a generous inheritance in the future (power)? Does the Majority Leader who unwillingly manages an Administration bill in the Senate do so because he is in awe of the Presidency and hence of the man who occupies the office (influence), or because he fears the President will actually punish him for noncompliance (power)? To say that the decisive test in situations like these turns on whether compliance is “voluntary” or “involuntary” is, in our judgment, not particularly helpful.²⁶

The difficulty in distinguishing sharply and clearly between power and influence is further complicated by the fact that the two are often mutually reinforcing, that is, power frequently generates influence and *vice versa*. On this score, the case of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin is especially instructive.²⁷ Shrewdly posing as the principal defender of the national security at the very moment when that became the dominant social value *vice* the inviolability of civil liberties, McCarthy managed for a period to stifle virtually all opposition to himself and what he stood for (influence). And from this base he was able to gain power, that is, to affect the making of actual decisions (votes in the Senate, acts of the Executive, etc.) by threats of severe deprivations (intervention in State political campaigns, destruction by accusation of the careers of appointive officials, etc.). By the same token,

²⁶ According to Bierstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 731, “. . . influence is persuasive while power is coercive. We submit voluntarily to influence while power requires submission.” In our view, if B submits voluntarily, power is operative; but if he submits under duress, force is operative.

It is worth noting that under our definition it would be incorrect to say that Marx “influenced” Lenin, or that Haydn “influenced” Mozart, or that Jesus Christ “influenced” the Conquistadores. In each of these cases the second *shared* the values of the first, *i.e.*, the relationship involved neither power nor influence, but *authority*. See part IV below.

²⁷ See Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York, 1959).

²⁵ One of the more penetrating critiques along these lines may be found in General Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York, 1959).

however, as public fears about national security subsided and concern for civil liberties grew, McCarthy's capacity to influence others sharply waned—and so, too, did his power.

Just because the distinction between power and influence is often blurred does not, however, lessen the importance of making the distinction. Nikita Khrushchev has little or no influence over Americans, yet it is obvious he exercises considerable power over us. On the other hand, the Supreme Court of the United States has widespread influence (and authority) over us both individually and collectively; its power is slight indeed.

IV

While authority is closely related to power, it is not a form thereof; it is, in fact, antithetical to it.²⁸ In saying this, we reject both the traditional definition of authority as "formal power"²⁹ and that which conceives it as "institutionalized power."³⁰

To regard authority as a form of power is, in the first place, not operationally useful. If authority is "formal power," then one is at a loss to know who has authority at times when the agent who possesses "formal power" is actually powerless; to say that Captain Queeg continued to have authority on the USS *Caine* after he was deposed of his command by the mutineers is to create needless confusion. Furthermore, to define authority as "formal power" is to fail to delineate the bounds of authority, other perhaps than to say that it ends where "real power" begins. For those who believe in limited or constitutional government such a construction is unthinkable.

To argue that "formal power" is circumscribed by law is also no answer. For it assumes without warrant the legitimacy of law. A policeman who demands obedience in the name of a law that is considered basically unjust will possess little authority in the eyes of persons steeped in the Anglo-American legal tradition. Nor is the problem completely solved by conceiving of authority in terms of constitutional legitimacy. Such a conception presupposes that all members of the community give allegiance to the constitution and the courts which interpret it. Do Federal courts have the authority to issue desegregation orders to southern school districts? According to many Southerners, in-

cluding some learned in the law, the answer is in the negative.

Friedrich's analysis of authority seems to us the most appropriate. He defines the concept as "a quality of communication" that possesses "the potentiality of reasoned elaboration."³¹ Like power, authority is here regarded as a relational concept: it is not that A possesses authority, but that B regards A's communication as authoritative. Also like power, an authority relationship implies rationality—although of a different order. That is, in a situation involving power, B is rational in the sense that he chooses compliance instead of defiance because it seems the less of two evils.³² But in a situation involving authority, B complies because he recognizes that the command is reasonable in terms of his own values; in other words, B defers to A, not because he fears severe deprivations, but because his decision can be rationalized.³³ It is not essential, however, that A's directive be supported by reasoning; it is sufficient that the potentiality of such reasoning be present and recognized.³⁴

If B believes that A's communication allows for reasoned elaboration when in fact it does not, it is "false" authority.³⁵ When the source of obedience shifts from "genuine" to "false" authority and B realizes that the communication cannot be elaborated effectively, then a relationship initially involving authority has been transformed into one involving power. For example, if a policeman demanded entrance to your house, you would probably comply on the implicit assumption that his demand was potentially supportable by reason. However, should you discover, once he was in, that his

³¹ *Authority*, pp. 36, 35.

³² As is perhaps obvious, if B chooses to defy A, the relationship no longer will involve power. This notion of rationality of choice is analogous to Thomas Hobbes's treatment of the relationship between fear and liberty. "Feare, and Liberty," he wrote, "are consistent; as when a man throweth his goods into the Sea for *feare* the ship should sink, he doth it nevertheless very willingly, and may refuse to doe it if he will: It is therefore the action, of one that was free." *Leviathan*, Everyman Edition, p. 110.

³³ Friedrich, *Authority*, p. 36. Reasoning also underlies the difference between authority and influence. Thus, if B complies with A's demand neither because he fears deprivations nor because his compliance is based upon reasoning, B has been influenced. This distinction will be further elaborated below.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁸ C. J. Friedrich, "Authority, Reason and Discretion," in C. J. Friedrich (ed.), *Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 37.

²⁹ Lasswell and Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

³⁰ Bierstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 733.

demand was *not* justifiable, your further compliance would undoubtedly derive from his exercise of power, not authority. The point is that the policeman's badge, uniform and gun—his symbols of "formal power"—do not constitute his authority. Whether he actually has that depends upon the authoritativeness of his communication, and that depends to a considerable degree upon the reasonableness of his command.

If the officer's elaboration of his demand to enter was sound in terms of the law, did he not have authority? Within the frame of our example, the answer is both no and yes. No, as far as you were concerned, since the elaboration did not make sense in terms of your own values. Yes, as far as society and its courts are concerned—provided, of course, that they themselves considered the law to be authoritative. As can readily be seen, in this kind of situation—which occurs frequently—authority is both a source of and a restraint upon the exercise of power; it both justifies and limits the use of power. But to those who believe in democracy this affords small comfort, unless authority itself is grounded upon reasoning that is meaningful to a majority of the people.

As a final note, it is worth observing that just as authority can be transformed into power, so can the reverse obtain. "Brainwashing" after the manner of George Orwell's "Big Brother" (and his real-life counterpart in Communist China) is a gruesome case in point; to obey Big Brother is not enough; you must *love* him. A different kind of illustration of the same point is the parent who uses the threat of spanking (power) to produce filial discipline which is based on acceptance of certain rules of the game (authority). Authority, in short, can cut both ways. In a humane and healthy society, it can perform the valuable function of limiting the behavior of men, especially those in official positions, to legitimate acts; for their actions must be potentially justified by "reasoned elaboration" in terms of values of a sane society. However, if the value frame of the society is pathological, authority, even as we have regarded it, can become a tool in furthering the state of pathology.

V

Perhaps the best way to summarize our effort to draw careful distinctions among power and related concepts is to apply them in a "real world" context—say, a Southern community where white citizens have decided to abide by a Federal court's desegregation order. As should be evident in the accompanying table, we assume that different persons in the

community had different reasons for bowing before the law.

Local officials and local businessmen, for example, were fearful of severe deprivations—they responded to an exercise of power. Those whites we style as "moderates," on the other hand, fall into two distinct groups: (a) those (Group I) who accepted as legitimate and reasonable the *substantive logic* underlying the Court order, and (b) those (Group II) who rejected the substantive ground but accepted the *judicial procedure* as legitimate and reasonable. Both groups, that is, responded to authority, in the vital senses that both perceived the Court's decree rationally and both considered it (even though on different grounds) to be capable of "reasoned elaboration."

A third body of whites—whom, following David Riesman, we label the "other-directed"—complied not because they feared severe deprivations (power) nor because they thought the order was reasonable and legitimate (authority), but because they felt obliged to follow the lead of those in the community they most respect (influence). Stated differently, although the "other-directed" group regarded the Court's ruling as illegitimate and unreasonable both on substantive and procedural grounds, it "went along with its betters."

Like those who were other-directed, the "masses", too, deferred to the newly dominant viewpoint in the community. But, unlike the former, the latter did so with little or no awareness of the issues at stake or of the fact that they were reversing their previous stand on the general question. The "masses," in other words, did not make a conscious choice between compliance and noncompliance with the Court order; following the pattern of manipulation, they simply conformed.

Under the heading of groups not complying with the Court order are officials who are incarcerated and fined for criminal contempt (force) and segregationist groups that are beyond the reach of the Court. Suffice it to say that the behavior of these groups—geared as they are to a different set of values—also can be analyzed and categorized in terms of power and its related concepts.

VI

For our purposes, a decision is "a set of actions related to and including the choice of one alternative rather than another . . .,"³⁶

³⁶ Robert A. Dahl, "The Analysis of Influence in Local Communities," in Charles Adrian (ed.), *Social Science and Community Action* (East Lansing, Mich., 1960), p. 26.

TABLE I. HYPOTHETICAL BEHAVIOR OF SOUTHERN WHITES TO A DESEGREGATION COURT ORDER

Concept	Subject
<i>Power</i> (relational, demand rationally perceived, conflict of values, threat of severe sanctions)	<i>Groups Which Choose Compliance</i> State and local officials (threat of criminal contempt) Businessmen (threat of economic boycott and race strife, resulting in loss of profits)
<i>Authority</i> (relational, demand rationally perceived and considered reasonable, possible conflict of values, no severe sanctions)	Moderates I (substantive grounds for Court's ruling reasonable) Moderates II (substantive grounds unreasonable, but judicial process legitimate and reasonable)
<i>Influence</i> (relational, demand rationally perceived, conflict of values, no severe sanctions)	"Other-Directed" Persons (judicial ruling, substantively and procedurally unreasonable, but apprehensive of standing in community)
<i>Manipulation</i> (non-relational, non-rational, no conflict of values nor sanctions)	<i>Groups Which Choose Neither Compliance Nor Non-compliance</i> Mass (conform to dominant behavior in community, with little or no recognition of the problem nor awareness of complying)
<i>Force</i> (relational to non-relational, nonrational, application of severe sanctions)	<i>Groups Which Choose Noncompliance</i> Defiant official subject to contempt of Court (incarceration reflects that values underlying defiance overshadow values gained by compliance)
<i>Power, Authority, etc.</i>	Extreme segregationists

or, more simply, "a choice among alternative modes of action. . ."³⁷ Thus, we differ sharply from Lasswell and Kaplan, to whom a decision is "a policy involving severe sanctions (deprivations)."³⁸ The basis for the contrast between our definition and theirs is clearcut: they hold that decisions are brought about solely by the exercise of power, while we believe that power is neither the only nor even the major factor underlying the process of decision-making and reactions thereto. We believe, in fact, that in some situations power is not involved at all, that in such situations the behavior of decision-makers and their subjects alike can be explained partially or entirely in terms of force, influence, or authority.

³⁷ Peter Rossi, "Community Decision-Making," in Roland Young (ed.) *Approaches to the Study of Politics* (Evanston, Ill., 1958), p. 364.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

Our position can be clarified by reference to the following diagram. Two important points may be drawn from it. First, every social decision involves interaction between the one or more persons seeking a given goal and the one or more persons whose compliance must be obtained. Thus, if A's attempt to exercise power or influence or whatever over B is ignored, there is no decision.

Second, compliance can be sought through the exercise of one or any combination of the four phenomena indicated on the diagram. However, if compliance is forthcoming, *it may or may not stem from the same source*. For instance, if B bows to A's wishes because A has threatened sanctions which B wishes to avoid, the resulting decision is one of "pure" power; both participants made their choices in the same frame of reference. On the other hand, if B's compliance is grounded, not on a fear of deprivations but on acceptance of A's values,

the resulting decision is a hybrid case, in the important sense that A sought to exercise power but in fact exercised authority. Similarly, cases can be identified in which A has sought to exert authority while B's compliance was given because he was influenced (see diagram). The combinations are many—

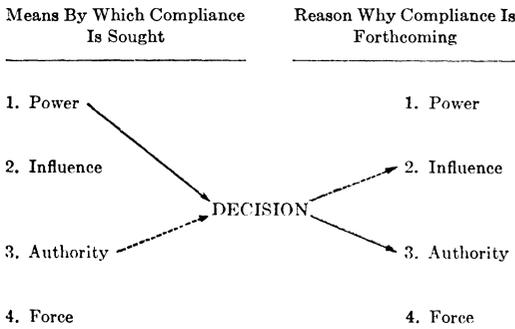


FIGURE 1. Diagram of impulse and response.

particularly if the analysis also takes into account situations where two or more of the phenomena come into play simultaneously.³⁹ The point is, in all events, that a decision cannot be said to be a result of power or influence or authority or force unless and until it is specified from whose point of view the decision is being examined, *i.e.*, from that of the one who seeks compliance or the one who gives it.

It may be objected that this approach is unworkable for empirical analysis because it necessitates mind-reading. We think not. The courts of law do, and so can we, distinguish between "specific" intent and intent inferred from actual behavior. We believe, in other words, that it is both feasible and necessary to deduce from detailed observation of the situation why persons act as they do.⁴⁰ To put it still another way, there is no shortcut, no simple and mechanical method, for gaining a

³⁹ For example, A may employ both authority and power to gain B's agreement, and B's response may have a similarly dual basis. An apparent case in point is the relationship between Adolf Hitler and some of his military chiefs during World War II. On this, consult William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York, 1960), pp. 366 ff. and *passim*.

⁴⁰ The approach we have in mind is exemplified by the untutored, but nonetheless penetrating, study of "Springdale" by Joseph Vidich and Arthur Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society* (Princeton, N.J., 1958). For further discussion of this point, see following section.

full understanding of the decision-making process.

We concede that our approach is less workable than that of Lasswell and Kaplan, Dahl, and others of that "school." On the other hand, because ours provides a broader conceptual frame within which to analyze decision-making, it makes easier the comparative study of the factors underlying different decisions in diverse circumstances. A road is thereby opened toward the development of a body of general theory with respect to the decision-making process. Moreover, because we distinguish carefully among the forces at work in any given situation, we minimize the risk of putting unwarranted emphasis upon one factor to the exclusion, wholly or partly, of others. Stated more bluntly, we put the phenomenon of power in proper perspective: we recognize that while decision-making frequently does involve power relationships, it very often does not.

VII

The other side of the coin is *nondecision-making*. When the dominant values, the accepted rules of the game, the existing power relations among groups, and the instruments of force, singly or in combination, effectively prevent certain grievances from developing into full-fledged issues which call for decisions, it can be said that a nondecision-making situation exists. This phenomenon is clearly distinguishable from the negative aspects of decision-making (deciding not to act or deciding not to decide), since the mere existence of the "mobilization of bias," to use Schattschneider's phrase, is sufficient to prevent a latent issue from becoming a question for decision.

It might be objected that since a nondecision, by definition, is a nonevent, it is not observable, and, therefore, is not an operationally-useful concept. Although it is true that a nondecision is not visible to the naked eye, a latent issue is discernible and so is the mobilization of bias. Thus it can be said that the *nondecision-making process* (the impact of the mobilization of bias upon a latent issue), in distinction to a nondecision, is indeed subject to observation and analysis.

In their perceptive study, *Small Town in Mass Society*, Vidich and Bensman, without calling it such, analyze the nondecision-making process in Springdale.⁴¹ For example, they relate that the school administrators in the community had basic grievances but, cognizant of the dominant rural values prevailing in the community, the established tradition of de-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

ciding all town issues by unanimous vote, and the predominance of nonprofessionals in posts of leadership, the schoolmen prudently kept their grievances to themselves. In choosing this course of action, the school officials admittedly made a decision. But it was not one brought about by any decision or combination of decisions by others with respect to their grievances. Quite the contrary, it reflected the schoolmen's realization that, by sustaining the mobilization of bias, the leaders of the community—even if indirectly and unconsciously—could, would, and often did exercise authority, power and influence against them.

In those instances when a latent issue of the type which is usually kept submerged is

successfully pushed forward and emerges as a public issue (for example, the recent emergence of Negro demands in the South), it is likely that the mobilization of bias will be directly and consciously employed against those who demand a redress of grievances by the decision-making organ. In such instances, the decision-making process preempts the field previously occupied by the nondecision-making process. And in so doing, it necessarily jeopardizes the previously-established mobilization of bias.

If the concept of nondecision-making proves a useful tool of analysis, it appears to us at this juncture that it can be effectively studied in terms of the categories suggested in this paper for the examination of decision-making.