Cosmopolitan Power in International Relations

How can nations optimize their power in the modern world system? Realist theory has underscored the importance of hard power as the ultimate path to national strength. In this vision, nations require the muscle and strategies to compel compliance and achieve their full power potential. However, changes in world politics have increasingly encouraged national leaders to complement traditional power resources with more enlightened strategies oriented around the use of soft power. The resources to compel compliance must be increasingly integrated with the resources to cultivate compliance. Only through this integration of hard and soft power can nations achieve their greatest strength in modern world politics, and this realization carries important implications for competing paradigms of international relations. The idea of power optimization can be delivered only through the integration of the three leading paradigms of international relations – realism, neoliberalism, and constructivism. Such an integration is manifest in a cosmopolitan theory of power.

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A Synthesis of Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism

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Dedicated to

My sons Alessio and Giulio Christian
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Preface

This book is the second part of a greater project on power. The first part culminated in a book entitled *The Power Curse: Influence and Illusion in World Politics* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2010). The two parts fit together as an analysis of the cycle of power in world politics. The first book analyzes how nations lose power. Paradoxically, many of the weakening effects that bring about this loss of power inhere in the very process of power augmentation itself. As nations grow stronger, they are systematically plagued with adverse consequences that undermine this strength. In this respect, as much as nations value power, power itself can be a curse. If decision makers are not sensitized to these consequences, and hence do not undertake strategies to limit the effects of these consequences, they may become victims of a power illusion (i.e., their nations will be far weaker than perceived). The present book is a natural corollary to the first. In a world where power is still a principal objective of nations, but the process of power augmentation is both precarious and plagued, how can nations optimize power? This book attempts to provide an answer to this important question. It does so by crossing paradigmatic boundaries to produce a theory of power optimization that combines compelling tenets of the three major paradigms in international politics: realism, neoliberalism, and constructivism. I refer to it as the theory of cosmopolitan power. Such a synthetic theory is necessary to produce a vision of power that best fits the modern world system. Although scholars have found such paradigmatic boundaries difficult to bridge, especially on the issue of power, changes in modern international relations have made such a bridge ever more necessary for the purpose of producing a
theory of power that better accords with the state of world politics in our epoch and beyond.

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