SPHERES OF INFLUENCE RECONSIDERED

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I would venture to say that to each of us these pairs of relationships bring to mind different types of influence—economic, military, diplomatic, cultural or ideological. This is why the concept needs to be reviewed.

I suggest that spheres of influence should be viewed in functional terms; that is, a sphere of influence can be based on social, economic, or military activity. Such a view of spheres of influence will more accurately reflect the true patterns of influence, known as spheres, which exist between states in the international community.

Meeting of the Western Regional Division of the Peace Research Society (International)

February 15, 1971

University of Washington
Seattle, Washington
Sphere of Influence: AN INTRODUCTION

The idea of "sphere of influence" gained widespread use after the Conference of Berlin in 1884-85 at which time European powers (as well as the not-so-powerful European states) divided up the continent of Africa into such spheres. At that time, the idea of sphere of influence was useful in that it was to serve to divert attention from the national rivalries which existed on the European continent to the area of conquest, exploration and exploitation. Spatial delimitation of spheres of influence enabled these states to pursue their own interests with little or no outside interference. At its inception the concept became tied to the relationship which developed (or was established) between the relatively backward African (multinational) state and an industrialized European state. In other words, the earliest definitions of sphere of influence were linked to colonial relationships which existed between a technologically advanced society and a lesser developed society. "A sphere of influence might roughly be defined as a backward territory over which an outside power claims hegemony. . . ."¹ G. W. Rutherford, reinforcing this definition with concrete examples of sphere of influence relationships, wrote that "... the phrase has been applied specifically to characterize the control of portions of Asia and Africa, certain islands in the Caribbean, and of regions in Central America."²

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Before World War I, the idea of a sphere of influence also served as a quasi-legal concept because of its inclusion within great power treaties. A sphere of influence could be created by agreement between two European powers, for example, the intent of which would be mutual respect for each other's sphere. H. J. Morgenthau noted that the "agreement between Great Britain and Germany in May, 1885, the first to make use of the term, provided for 'a separation and definition of their respective spheres of influence in the territories of the Gulf of Guinea.' In it, 'Great Britain engages not to make acquisitions of territory, accept Protectorates, or interfere with the extension of Guinea which lies east of a defined line.' Germany engages not to make acquisitions, accept Protectorates, or interfere with the extension of British influence in that part of the coast and interior of Guinea which lies between the line as above described . . . and the British Colony of Lagos."¹

Schuman reminded us of the fact that these agreements were not uncommon and that "between 1890 and 1896, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Portugal concluded a whole series of such bilateral arrangements delimiting their spheres in Africa."² In the case of Africa, most spheres of influence were respected by the European powers. Problems of conflicting interest arose most often at the interfaces between the various spheres. Regardless of how this form of


². Schuman (1934), p. 298.
hegemony was realized, that is, through bilateral or multilateral diplomatic endeavors or through unilateral pronouncements such as the Monroe Doctrine, once the sphere of influence was established "... other powers [were] in effect warned not to trespass on the region thus earmarked."¹ A typical phrase which appeared in European diplomatic agreements would read as follows: "It is understood that no companies nor individuals subject to one power can exercise sovereign rights in a sphere assigned to the other, except with the assent of the latter."²

The international pre-World War I setting, i.e., the operability of the European balance of power, the desire to avert war on the European continent, the acceptance of limited wars fought for limited objectives, not to mention the availability of the African continent peopled by militarily weak societies, made possible the delimitation of sphere of influence or regions of hegemony. Most often diplomatic efforts between European statesmen supported by their military establishments enabled spheres of influence to be established and maintained by the European states. It might be argued that their overriding objective related to the establishment of indirect control over the local political leaders because of the belief that the political subsystem was the most important subsystem in the overarching societal system. In many cases the political leaders were permitted to rule as long as their decisions did not conflict with, or adversely affect, the influencing state's interests,

¹ Schuman (1934), p. 297.
within the territorial domain of that sphere of influence. Note the
author's emphasis that influence in the political sphere was considered
to be the most important. Such influence in that sphere made it possible
for the influencing power to be free from interference perpetrated by the
influenced state.

Today, authors continue to view the idea of sphere of influence as
it was viewed seventy or eighty years ago; that is, they tend to view
spheres of influence in terms of territorial control. A state either
establishes a sphere of influence or it doesn't. An influenced state is
either in the sphere of influence of an influencing state or it is not.
Once such a sphere has been established, the influence of the influencing
state can be of a generalized nature. Such a state can involve itself in
any of the internal affairs of the influenced state without fear of a break-
down in their existing relationship because this territorial sphere of
influence implies military hegemony in that territory.

For example, according to Hans Morgenthau, "it can be said that
the Monroe Doctrine, especially in its application since the presidency
of Theodore Roosevelt, established the Western Hemisphere as a sphere
of influence for the United States. In the aftermath of World War II, the
Soviet Union created a sphere of influence as a political fact in the
territories of the nations of eastern Europe and of the Balkans, with the
exception of Greece (and later Yugoslavia)."¹

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F. Schuman viewed sphere of influence as a term used to "describe areas nominally under the jurisdiction of native states but allocated by agreement among the empire-builders to the control of particular colonial powers." ¹

C. O. Lerche viewed this concept in a territorial sense when he wrote that the sphere of influence "is a device by which competing great powers delineate their areas of hegemony. Each of the great powers concerned undertakes to respect the others' power rights in its own zone, assuming that in this manner disputes between great powers can be minimized... The Balkans are presently regarded as belonging to the Russian sphere of influence." ² Needless to say, innumerable citations could be made in support of the contention that spheres of influence are considered to be territorially based, i.e., that the territorial factor is considered to be the most important factor. ³

It is here suggested that one must consider the functional aspects of sphere of influence in light of the fact that in the post-World War II period, there have occurred several developments which have caused drastic changes in interstate relations. These developments have adversely affected the utility of traditional techniques for establishing territorial spheres of

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influence. Some of these important developments are considered to be the following.

First of all, since the end of the Second World War there has been a proliferation in the number of member states in the United Nations. In large measure this has been because of the decolonization programs carried out in Asia and Africa. The increased number of states, while indicating an influx of new votes into the UN and indicating an alteration in superpower vote gathering ability, also indicates that these new states represent an increase in the number of potential targets for those states which might seek to influence other states. In the colonial era, interference in the internal affairs of a colony was construed as interference in the affairs of the colonial power as well. For example, the Portuguese threat to the status of Northern Rhodesia as a British Protectorate in the 1880's was perceived by the British as a threat to Great Britain and to her interests. Likewise, to threaten the status of Angola or Mozambique was to threaten Portugal itself. Today, however, most of these colonies are independent states. At least to those powers which possess the resources to influence the newly independent states, these states have become "fair game" as targets for their influence. They can now seek to influence their activities internally, as well as externally, without the fear of coming into direct conflict with the former colonial power.

Secondly, the development of implements of war have caused states to become more cautious in their attempts to set up and maintain spheres of influence. Technological development, especially in the area of
armaments, communications and transportation, has rendered overt aggression a serious blow. Those nations which seek to influence the affairs of another nation are, therefore, forced to resort to what Andrew Scott termed "cold warfare," the central objective of which is the "informal penetration" of another state. Each of the following in Scott's (partial) list serves as an example of this specialization of influence:

"Collaboration among the NATO powers; armament programs; economic aid, military aid; training of civilian and military officials of other nations; Voice of America broadcasts; organization of guerrilla campaigns; activities of Communist parties and other Communist auxiliaries and front organizations; coups d'etat; overseas information programs; cultural exchange programs; technical assistance; and subsidizing of political parties, newspapers, labor unions, and other organizations."¹

The fear of a local war escalating into a nuclear one remains real and is of great concern to virtually all national decision makers, the nuclear-haves as well as the have-nots. State objectives, such as the desire to influence the affairs of another state, may not have been scrapped by these technological developments but the tactics and strategies associated with the possible fulfillment of such objectives used earlier in the non-nuclear period, have obviously faced reappraisal by virtually all states.

Thirdly, one might argue that there has developed in the post-World War II period an emphasis on the new-found importance of the

rule of law in the international community and for an effective international organization. These realizations tended, generally speaking, to sublimate potential military conflict into non-violent, competitive conflict sometimes manifested by the mustering of support among the members of the international community by various nations, large and small, seeking support for a national cause. For example, the United States and the Soviet Union often find themselves in competitive situations as they seek to muster international support in the General Assembly and/or the Security Council for one policy or another.

The seemingly non-zero sum nature of the game of international politics, as it is played in the United Nations, causes those states which seek to influence other states to specialize with respect to their influence.

Finally, all states realize that their resources are indeed scarce. In almost all countries, including those considered to be highly industrialized, the demands being made against the political system for a more equitable distribution of the system’s resources are constantly increasing. Coupling the fact that national resources for all states are scarce, with the fact that there has been a rapid increase in the number of new and independent states, one might be able to surmise that a state’s resources available to influence each state, e.g., resources per state, have been greatly reduced. Targets, as well as the techniques of influence, must be carefully selected. Attempts must be made to match the targets with the resources available and with the techniques to be used.

In addition to all of these developments occurring in the post-World War II period, one cannot overlook the fact that this has also been a period of ideological confrontation between the Communist and non-Communist political blocs. As noted above, these developments have caused national leaders to rethink their goals, tactics and strategies. And even if the state's long-range goals remain unchanged, that is, even if the state seeks to establish a territorial sphere of influence (in which their activities can be multifunctional), that state's strategies and tactics must be changed. In fact, no longer might it be necessary or even desirable for a state to control, by use of the threat of military intervention, the activities of another state. Perhaps the influencing state can achieve the same goal, that of the influencing of another state's policies, without having to establish or to justify or to defend a territorial sphere of influence. Such a situation might be realized through the influencing state's specialization of influence.

The Specialization of Influence:

Analytically, the sphere of influence concept can be said to have two basic aspects—territorial and functional. By the territorial aspect we mean that the sphere of influence established and maintained by the influencing state encompasses a territorially based, socially organized group such as a tribal kingdom, a city, a state or a region (either supra-national or sub-national). In addition, the influencing state's initial activity is of a military or quasi-military nature; that is, the
influencing state asserts its military hegemony within the area delimited as its sphere of influence. The sphere is delimited by concrete boundaries which serve to set it off from its spatial environment which is not to be included with the sphere. As noted earlier, the objectives of the influencing state may be mono- or multifunctional but the functional involvement within the influenced state is of secondary importance with respect to the establishment of the sphere. Great power interactions in China at the turn of this century serve as an example of territorial sphere of influence.

This new imperialist technique [i.e., sphere of influence] was applied to the economic subjugation of China after the Chino-Japanese War of 1894-5 had demonstrated the helplessness of the Celestial Empire. Russia acquired as her sphere of interest North Manchuria and Outer Mongolia with Port Arthur as a strategic base; Japan acquired South Manchuria and Inner Mongolia with Formosa and the Pescadores as a strategic base; Germany leased Kiaochow, and thus obtained the Shantung peninsula as her sphere of exploitation; Great Britain by the acquisition of Waihaiwai laid claim to the Yangtse Valley, Thibet and the Szechuan province; while France controlled Southwestern China, including Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Yunnan, and Kwangchowang.¹

The functional aspect of a sphere of influence refers to the hegemonic relationship which is created with the influenced region by the influencing state and which is based on a social activity such as trade or aid of a military or an economic nature, cultural exchange programs as well as other techniques of informal penetration cited earlier. Whereas both aspects have been present in traditional spheres of influence, the territorial aspect had been considered most important. However, in the age

¹ S. Nearing and Joseph Freeman, Dollar Diplomacy (N.Y.: Modern Reader, 1969), p. 36.
of the "Balance of Terror" the functional aspect apparently has become of primary importance. The territorial aspect remains of some importance in that the influencing state seeks to influence the behavior of another state through interstate interactions based on activities other than the military; that is to say, based on socio-politico-economic activities.\(^1\) Conor Cruse O'Brien presented us with a prime example of a functional sphere of influence when he wrote about Franco-Upper Volta relations.

"Thus, if France, for example, has a powerful say in the political life of Upper Volta, this is not because she needs the resources or the market—both of them are almost non-existent—of that desolate and destitute

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1. In his study, *Who Governs?* Robert Dahl described the relationships existing between the mayor's office and the various municipal bureaus and departments in New Haven, Connecticut as having been analogous to the spheres of influence which exist in the international community of states. He noted that the mayor's office had overall territorial jurisdiction in New Haven. He also noted that within New Haven, there existed several functional departments, each concerned with a set of specific socio-political activities. These departments were the independent sovereignties to which Dahl referred when he wrote that "The characteristic pattern of integration in New Haven before Lee's [mayoralty] victory in 1953 seems to have been one of independent sovereignties that managed to avoid severe conflict by their agreements on spheres of influence. . . . The Board of Fire Commissioners, the Parking Authority, the Housing Authority, the Department of Health, the Department of Public Works and the Building, Plumbing and Housing Inspectors were each in a different part of the forest" (p. 190). These bureaus concerned themselves with building their municipal power base on the functions they were designed to perform. With respect to that function, however, their position was one of virtual autonomy. Dahl referred to this phenomenon as the specialization of influence. "Probably the most striking characteristic of influence in New Haven is the extent to which it is specialized; that is, individuals who are influential in one section of public activity tend not to be influential in another sector. . . ." (p. 169); See R. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).
country, but on the contrary, because France annually makes up the
deficit in the Upper Volta budget...\textsuperscript{1} O'Brien failed to mention
that the possible motive behind French support may have been to keep
Upper Volta within the French culture zone.

Another example of the existence of functional spheres of influence
was supplied by Nikita Khrushchev when he intimated that political (e.g.,
territorial) independence was not enough. "The winning of political
independence does not mean the final liberation of the peoples of the
former colonies and semi-colonies from the yoke of the foreign
monopolies. The countries that have won their freedom are faced with
the task of achieving economic independence..."\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{Negative and Positive Spheres of Influence}

Not all spheres of influence, functional or territorial, are similar
with respect to the intentions of the influencing state in its desire to
establish such a sphere. Rutherford dichotomizes this complex
phenomenon—intent—into positive and negative aspects.\textsuperscript{3} By negative
he means that spheres of influence can be established in order to
prevent other states from creating such a sphere in that particular

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\textsuperscript{1} C. Cruse O'Brien, "Contemporary Forms of Imperialism, "Studies
on the Left, Vol. 5 \#4 (1965), p. 20. O'Brien termed this relationship
one of "uneconomic imperialism."
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\textsuperscript{2} N. S. Krushchev, The National Liberation Movement, (Moscow:
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\textsuperscript{3} Rutherford, op. cit., pp. 300-301.
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region.\footnote{Ibid., p. 302. It "appears in the form of areas from which one power seeks to exclude the influence of another without manifesting any intention of advancing a further claim on its own account."} Rephrased, one might say that a negative sphere of influence exists when the influencing state establishes such a sphere because it perceives its loss to be greater than if no action were taken to establish the particular sphere in question. Rutherford cites, as an example of the negative aspect, the U.S.-Haitian Treaty of 1915 by which Haiti agreed "not to surrender any territory . . . by sale, lease, or otherwise . . . to any foreign government."\footnote{Ibid., p. 302.} This agreement was just another manifestation of America's desire to keep European states out of the Caribbean region.\footnote{The subjective nature of the evaluation of the intent of a nation's actions, poses a problem which must be considered. For example, placing U.S.-Haitian relations in the negative category might be considered a questionable act; such a placement would not be accepted by those who consider America to be an imperialistic nation.} Negative influence relationships might be said to exist between the following states: The United States and Israel (functional); The U.S.S.R. and Cuba (functional); the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia (territorial); the Warsaw Treaty Organization members (territorial).

In establishing a positive sphere, the influencing state not only seeks to keep out the influence of rival states but also seeks to become involved in the economic and political activities of the influenced state. One might say that the influencing state establishes such a sphere
because it perceives the advantages accruing to it by establishing a sphere to be more favorable than if it failed to establish such a sphere. In the establishment of a positive sphere of influence, the objective of the influencing state, on the one hand, might be monofunctional in that the state might seek to develop particular economic interests such as a railway system or a port complex. On the other hand, the objective might be multifunctional; that is, the state might seek the simultaneous development of political, military, cultural and ideological, as well as economic, interests.

As an example of what might be done with a combination of these aspects of sphere of influence, I cite the following suggestions. Investigation of the pre-World War I period might show spheres of influence were, generally speaking, of an economic-positive and/or a military positive nature. In the post World War II period, these spheres of influence have been, generally speaking, in the economic-negative and military negative categories. Therefore, it appears that the influencing state today is less concerned with the exploitation of the resources of the influenced state than has been the case in the past. During the nuclear age, it appears that (at least) the superpowers have sought and do continue to seek to establish negative functional spheres of influence in order to deprive their rival ideological bloc of the influenced state's resources. For example, even when the Soviet Union felt that its oil reserves were adequate, it continued to seek to separate the West from its Middle East oil supply. It attempted

1. These thoughts on spheres of influence were developed through discussions with Dr. Anthony Joes, Department of Politics, St. Joseph's College.
to do so by injecting its military and economic aid into that region.

Conclusion

Searching for and determining the existence of spheres of influence according to 19th Century criteria, i.e., considerations of territoriality, territorial propinquity, etc., has been extremely misleading to scholars as well as to diplomats and policy makers. Perceived spheres of influence such as America's Western Hemisphere, the Soviet Union's Eastern Europe of the Chinese People's Republic's Southeast Asia, must be re-evaluated. The territorial propinquity of small states to larger ones must not serve as a sole and conclusive argument in determining the existence of a sphere of influence. A study of the pattern of interaction between pairs of states might yield a more accurate picture or map of existing spheres of influence. Paraphrasing David Mitrany, one might say that viewing spheres of influence functionally might change the dimensions of such spheres but not their nature.

1. Actually, those spheres of influence which are established in regions contiguous to the influencing state or to a possession or colony thereof, apparently have a higher probability of being accepted by the international community, in general, or at the least by other major powers, specifically. For example, one might cite as examples of such a situation the propinquity that exists between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the United States and the Western Hemisphere, China and Southeast Asia and perhaps even Algeria and France. In 1918, Wright specifically discussed this phenomenon in light of Japan's claim to areas in China. See Quincy Wright, "Territorial Propinquity," AJIL, Vol. 12, pp. 521-569.