



## THE CONCEPT OF “INTERNATIONAL ROLE” IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND PRACTICE: THE “PIPP” ANALYTICAL MODEL AND ROLES ACTORS PLAY IN WORLD POLITICS\*

ZAGADNIENIE „MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ ROLI” W TEORII  
I PRAKTYCE STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH.  
MODEL ANALITYCZNY PIPP A ROLE ODGRYWANE  
PRZEZ AKTORÓW W POLITYCE ŚWIATOWEJ

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— ABSTRACT —

Although a current and marketable term in the literature and political discourses, the notion of ‘international role’ still lacks a clear and succinct, let alone consensually applicable, definition. This article posits that, from the actorness perspective as a point of departure, the concept of “international role” may well be assessed through the lenses of the quad-element “PIPP” analytical model, which is herewith developed. Thereby, the analysis of actor’s international role has to make a long conceptual sojourn from power, influence presence to performance (PIPP). These four embedded concepts (PIPP model) help assess the explanandum, i.e. “actor’s international role”, in a theoretically-informed, systematic and holistic way, thus avoiding the pitfalls of sporadic (mis) usage found in common parlance.

— ABSTRAKT —

Choć jest atrakcyjnym i nader aktualnym terminem w dyskursie politycznym i literaturze przedmiotu, pojęciu „międzynarodowej roli” wciąż brakuje jasnej i zwięzłej, a przynajmniej uzgodnionej co do właściwości definicji. W artykule przyjęto założenie, że wybierając za punkt wyjścia perspektywę „aktorstwa” na scenie polityki, zagadnienie „międzynarodowej roli” można z powodzeniem wartościować z wykorzystaniem czteroelementowego modelu analitycznego PIPP, rozwijanego w niniejszym tekście. Tym samym analiza międzynarodowej roli aktora musi przebyć długą konceptualną drogę od potęgi (*Power*), wpływu (*Influence*) przez obecność (*Presence*) po działalność (*Performance*). Osadzenie rozważań w obrębie tych czterech pojęć (model PIPP) jest pomocne w wyjaśnieniu *explanandum*, tj. „międzynarodowej

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rola aktora”, w sposób systematyczny i całościowy, podbudowany teorią, co pozwoli uniknąć pułapek wynikających ze sporadycznego – także błędnego – używania tego terminu w mowie potocznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** teoria międzynarodowej roli, model PIPP, potęga, wpływ, obecność, działalność międzynarodowa

## INTRODUCTION: SITUATING THE PROBLEM

In social sciences, conceptual analysis usually starts with establishing the meaning of concepts in question. This becomes a problem when the conceptual analysis also ends here. Thereby, many marketable terms and notions travel across disciplines and discourses and are in principle “recognizable” but not always fully comprehensible phenomena. This especially holds true in the domain of political science and IR, where the concepts like “anarchy”, “actor”, or even “system”, just to name a few, bear different connotations and channel distinct ideas than in other science fields, let alone political and public discourses. In his recent work on concepts and reason in political theory, Hampsher-Monk (2015, p. xv) contends that once current linguistic-conceptual analysis “often revealed the ‘exhaustion’ of the meaning of a word through the accumulation of a range of ‘standard’ uses so wide as to make quite impossible the identification of any core – or ‘family’ – of meanings, or even criteria by which to identify blatant misuses of it”, thus leading to “their overly-adventurous rhetorical deployment”. When it comes to the overly-adventurous rhetorical deployment and even misuses of the term, the concept of “international role” and “role” as such is the one that definitely needs to be addressed. Although a current and marketable term in the literature and political discourses, the notion of “international role” still lacks a clear and succinct, let alone consensually applicable, definition. A semantic conceptual analysis would lend not much help in disentangling what a “role” means under specific political constellations. Hence, the notion needs to be articulated within a given context and applicable area. This article seeks to develop an analytical model of the “international role” concept in IR that is applicable to the realm of international cooperation, in particular – strategic partnerships between distinct international actors (states and international organizations). There are over 200 states in the world, and nearly double as much International Organizations (not to mention thousands of NGOs) – they all are

international actors, but only a handful of them enter in strategic relationships of one or another sort. Conventional wisdom holds that it is the actor's international *role* that informs the choice of partner by another actor.

This paper posits that, from the actorness perspective as a point of departure, the concept of "international role" may well be assessed through the lenses of the quad-element "PIPP" analytical model, which is herewith developed. Thereby, the analysis of actor's international role has to make a long conceptual sojourn from *presence* to *influence* to *power* to *performance* (PIPP). These four embedded concepts (PIPP model) help assess the explanandum, i.e. "actor's international role", in a theoretically-informed, systematic and holistic way, thus avoiding the pitfalls of sporadic (mis)usage found in common parlance.

#### THE "ROLE THEORY" IN IR LITERATURE AND THE "PIPP" ANALYTICAL MODEL

"International role" is a current and marketable term overwhelmingly used with reference to international affairs, with commonly mixed connotation of various features (care, presence, appearance, guise; potential, mission, tour of duty, task; act, involvement, behaviour, function, enterprise, undertaking, pursuit, work, operation; contribution, influence, impact, power, utility, service, performance) swiftly implied, thus not always reasonably justified.

Commonsensibly, "role" can be defined as (a) *duty*, i.e. "the position or purpose that someone or something has in a situation, organization, society, or relationship", and as (b) *acting*, i.e. "an actor's part in a film or play"<sup>1</sup>.

Scientifically, there is however a much longer and winding road to go in order to arrive at the conception of an "international role" from actorness perspective as a point of departure. The analysis of actor's international role has to make a long conceptual sojourn from *presence* to *influence* to *power* to *performance*. These four embedded concepts (PIPP) help assess our explanandum, "actor's international role", in a theoretically-informed systematic and holistic way, thus avoiding the pitfalls of sporadic (mis)usage found in common parlance.

*Normative approach* to the idea of an "international role" would frame it as a conception and expectation of a state's international actorness rationale – its

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<sup>1</sup> "Role". *Cambridge Dictionary Online*. Available at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/role>.

purpose and orientation of external action. Aggestam (2004, p. 8) posits that “a role reflects norms and ideas about the purpose and orientation of the state as an entity and as an actor in the international system”. Hence, for a “role”, execution ideas and beliefs are said to matter no less than capabilities and rational calculations – a frequent point of reference for structural-functionalist students. Attempting to conceptualize “Europe’s international role”, as put it in the title of the field-introductory *JCMS* article, Hill (1993) adopts a *structural-functional approach* to capture the EU’s image as a powerful and progressive force in the reshaping of the international system, the functions it actually might be fulfilling in the international system and its capabilities necessary to perform these tasks. The so-called “capability-expectations gap”, which describes the contending conceptions of the EU’s international role, appears in the article and the subsequent scholarship as an opportunity and challenge for charting the Union’s international actorness. Trying to identify a distinctive “role” for Europe in the world, Hill (1993, p. 307) acknowledges once again, in addition to his 1979 writings, that “[t]he idea of a role as the basis for any foreign policy has severe limitations”. In its simplest understanding, *the idea of a role* assumes that: “an actor can and should find for itself something approximating to a part played on a stage, namely a distinctive, high-profile and coherent identity. But if all were to seek this in international relations, then nationalism inexorably would follow, whereas, when the most powerful do so they are likely to be deluded into looking for ‘a place in the sun,’ the leadership of the free world’ and other apparent panaceas, instead of concentrating on the more tedious work of crafting the endless necessary compromises between national interests and the long-run requirements of a working international system” (Hill, 1993, p. 307). In Hill’s (1993, p. 307) understanding, conceptualizing actor’s international role involves, accordingly, using concepts to understand actor’s various activities in the world, whereas not presupposing to outline a single “role” which an actor does or might follow, but necessarily includes deliberations on the identity and image (status) of the actor in question.

Remarkably, in practice of international relations and governance, the “role” of both states and IOs has been observed and recognized especially in public discourses. Some of the recent scholar attempts have also aimed at disentangling, in a comparative perspective, of a “role” states and IOs play in distinct policy areas, for instance: in reconciling sustainable development, public governance and globalization (French, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> French (2002, p. 136) maintains that all the controversies surrounding the role of states and IOs notwithstanding, “[w]hat is certain, however, is that for there to be any possibility of reconciliation,

As indicated beforehand, the current conception of actor's "international role" envisages a holistic and systemic perspective on *four embedded actorness features* – power, influence, presence, and performance (PIPP). Such a quad-element conception allows to better analytically grasp the appearance and performing of actors as would-be or actual strategic partners. It also allows to better (more inclusively) capture the practice of strategic partnerships, and international cooperation between states and IOs, considering potentials and exercises of both passive and active leverages, just as much as ability to hold credible commitments, that is crucial in the assertion of a strategic actor and, eventually, of a strategic partner. The below table offers an overview of "international role" as a compound concept consisting of four core elements:

**Table 1.** PIPP – analytical model of the 'international role' concept (PIPP-metrics)

PIPP metrics	Conceptualization	Operationalization and measurement	
Power	<i>Particular influence relationship, generated from the ability to alter others behaviour and capability to maintain own course of action, [power = influence capability vs influenceability (liability to influence) correlation]</i>	levels of power demonstrated by actor: a) global power [in case of IOs – also important whether supranational or international], b) major regional actor/power, c) minor regional actor/power	any combination, n/a
Influence	<i>Normative or material means/ constructs of leverage [= influence capability]</i>	One of the existing influence indices, or a distinct set of relevant influence indicators, including: 1) human resources, or size of population (for IOs – a compound size of member states' population numbers), 2) size of sovereign territory (for IOs – territorial scope of jurisdiction), 3) economic strength, or wealth [GNP], 4) technology and development trend, 5) trade index, 6) military strength.	any combination, n/a

the role of public governance – as developed by *both* nation States and international organizations – will be pivotal in attempting to maintain a necessary balance between the numerous competing interests that such paradigms inevitably generate<sup>2</sup>.

PIPP metrics	Conceptualization	Operationalization and measurement			
Presence	<i>Visibility and feasibility in either geographical and/or policy terms, which may be both a result of purposive external action and an unintended consequence of domestic policy-making processes</i>	+	+	+	-
Performance	<i>The process and the outcome of exercise of powers and conduct of international practices</i> Core elements of 'performance': <i>relevance</i> (= assessment/perception as astrategic actor); <i>effectiveness</i> (= goal achievement); <i>financial/ resource viability</i> (= ability of the performing actor to raise/allocate the funds required); <i>efficiency</i> (= ratio between outputs accomplished and costs incurred)	Performance can be: a) <i>satisfactory or successful</i> , i.e. combination of the first group's positive and second group's negative (RE <sup>+</sup> FE <sup>-</sup> ) or both positive (RE <sup>+</sup> FE <sup>+</sup> ), b) <i>negative</i> value of the first group indicators results in non-satisfactory or unsuccessful performance level in either possible combination with the second group indicators (RE <sup>-</sup> FE <sup>+</sup> or RE <sup>-</sup> FE <sup>-</sup> )			
Actor's INTERNATIONAL ROLE		(0,80–1,00) key strategic actor (superpower)	(0,50–0,80) strong strategic actor (great power)	(0,10–0,50) moderate strategic actor (middle power)	(0–0,10) non-strategic actor (ordinary power)

Source: Author's own compilation.

In what follows, the four core elements of the “international role” concept (*PIPP*) will be dismantled in a more detailed way.

### The PIPP's “Power” Element and “International Role” Concept

“Power” is, without any exaggeration, a currency of international relations<sup>3</sup>: it is a determinant of international behaviour just as it is apparently the most frequently used concept in the study of political and social sciences as well, especially in international relations. Hans J. Morgenthau (1948) even defined

<sup>3</sup> For the first time, Lieber (1972, p. 93) has drawn an analogy between power and money which were both seen as “currencies” of respective systems: power is a “currency of the political system in the way that money is the currency of the economy”.

international (and indeed all) politics as a "struggle for power". General understanding of power in social sciences is that power is *A's* ability to get *B* do what it otherwise would not do. Such a perspective on power presupposes *active engagement* or *leverage* exercised in order to get the outcomes one wants to achieve. Arnold Wolfers has, however, gone further in this context as to more broadly stipulate that power, in international relations, can be exercised in a passive way, too, wielding a sort of *passive leverage*. In his words, power is "the ability to move others or to get them to do what one wants them to do and not to do what one does not want them to do" (Wolfers, 1962, p. 103). Thus, these are not only carrots and sticks that work as mechanisms of power exercise, but also attraction or socialization may channel the patterns of power and bring about necessarily expected change. Moreover, power is detectable not only in proactive efforts of one actor in international relations as to cause the expected behaviour of another actor or actors, but also in leverage of deterring latter ones from doing anything the former one would deem unwanted.

Viewing *power as an influence relationship*, Kalevi J. Holsti (1967, p. 160) treats power as a multidimensional concept consisting of (a) the acts by which one actor influences another actor, (b) the capabilities utilized for this purpose, and (c) the response elicited.

Given the many blurred factors implied, *measuring power* is rather a formidable task, an equation with (too) many unknowns. And this is not only due to the necessary therefor (but not necessarily correct) oversimplification that would deem observable units, states and international organisations, the 'same' (or isomorphic) properties, attributable to cardinal numbers, and thus neglecting the "psychological" element – behaviour (or *misbehaviour*) of actors driven by respective – human – decision-makers<sup>4</sup>. To no small account, this is a problem also because of the lack of theories of international relations based (exclusively) upon quantification, save the game theory, as widely accepted as, for instance, the theories of economic behaviour and econometrics. Hence, measuring power relates more to the deficiencies inherent in existing theory rather than in the measurement techniques themselves.

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<sup>4</sup> This "human decisional behaviour" presents a palpable opportunity to study decision-makers' preferences, habits and sequences of decisions made to predict the ones that can be made in foreign policy, and, at the same time, a challenge to determinist (quantification-based) conception of international relations, and cooperation in particular.

Even just a couple of years ago, Nye (2011, p. 9) denied any possibility of measuring power and doing it as right as one could measure energy in physics or money in economics. While acknowledging the many efforts which have been made by scholars over the years “to provide formulas that can quantify power international affairs”, the concept of power, although widely used, still is “surprisingly elusive and difficult to measure” (Nye, 2011, p. 9). To illustrate the case, he refers to the formula distilled in 1977 by Ray Cline, a high-ranking official in the CIA, who was tasked by the U.S. leadership to present with numbers what was the balance of American and Soviet power during the Cold War. This formula encompassed six variables in two correlating groups (population, territory, economy, military, strategy, will):

$$\text{Perceived Power} = (\text{Population} + \text{Territory} + \text{Economy} + \text{Military}) \\ \times (\text{Strategy} + \text{Will})$$

**Figure 1.** Power measurement formula by Ray Cline, 1977

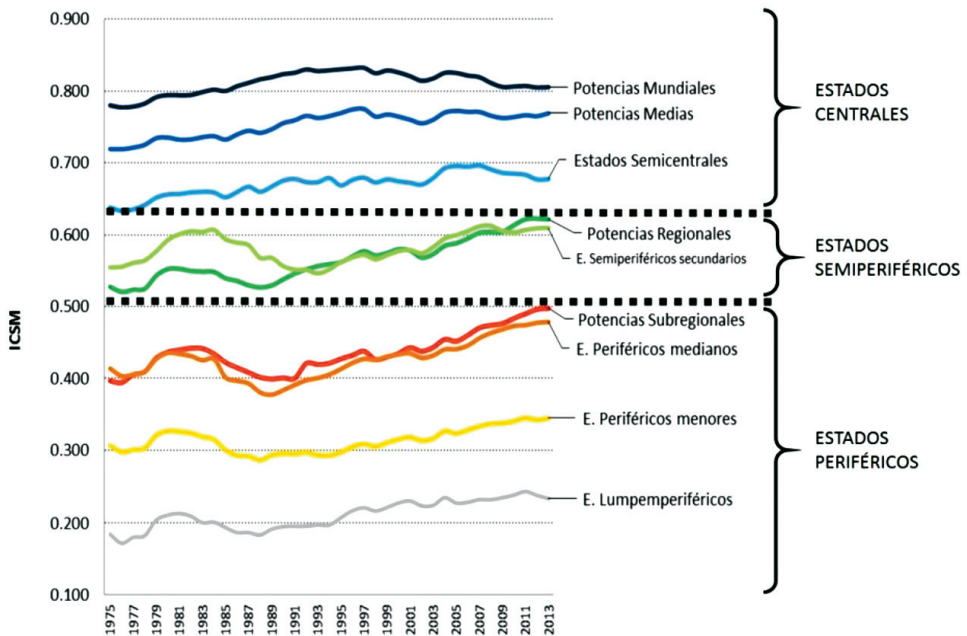
Source: Nye (2011, p. 10).

Nye (2011, p. 10) laments that, back in 1977, with all the numbers inserted into the formula, Ray Cline concluded that “the Soviet Union was twice as powerful as the United States”, but “as we now know, this formula was not a very good predictor of outcomes”. While reflecting on several other power indices developed by now, that in one or another way heavily rely on military force as main indicator in whatever combination, Nye (2011, p. 10) decisively argues that “[a]ny attempt to develop a single index of power is doomed to fail because power depends upon human relationships that vary in different contexts”.

Consequently, any particular study would certainly benefit from a coherent and study-specific determination of “power” deployed by international (individual and collective) actors as derived from – conditional – *influence capability vs influenceability (liability to influence)* “metrics”. In this way, this article rather tends to lean on Holsti’s (1967, p. 160) original understanding of power as an influence relationship. Conceived that way, power can be assessed against the evaluation of actors’ capacity to either play big or small, i.e. against the backdrop of the – conditionally assumed – power scope, the ability to alter behaviour of regional or global players. In his recent extensive elaborations on world power indices, Morales Ruvalcaba (2015, p. 18) divides world powers, indeed



in a neo-Marxist fashion, into three clusters – centre states, semi-peripheries, and peripheries, based on their capability to exert influence and be influenced (*Figure 2*):



**Figure 2.** Tripartite Structure of World Powers (Morales Ruvalcaba, 2015)

Acknowledging, in principle, the usefulness of such a tripartite treatment of world powers, the necessity to make a model more flexible and applicable within different theoretical approaches informs the suggestion of the current article to basically distinguish between the following *three levels* (*conditional indicators*) of actors' power, that can be seminally deployed for empirical analyses of actors' "international roles": global or global-in-the-making power, major regional and minor regional power.

## The PIPP's "Influence" Element and "International Role" Concept

Arnold Wolfers deemed it important "to distinguish between power and influence, the first to mean the ability to move others by the threat or infliction of deprivations, the latter to mean the ability to do so through promises of grants and benefits" (Wolfers, 1962, p. 103). In fact, Wolfers termed "power" in "hard power" terms, whereas "influence", in his understanding, is what is currently known as a "soft power". One can also draw analogy between Kindleberger's "strength" and "prestige" as power instances in its intertwined economic and political contexts: power is a "strength capable of being exercised", that is, "strength *plus* the capacity to use it effectively", just as it is "prestige", that is, "the respect which is paid to power" (Kindleberger, 1970, p. 56, 65). Power and influence are certainly inextricably linked, and as a rule, to completely agree with Wolfers (1962, p. 103–104), "they will be found to go hand in hand" in practice. One may distinguish between them, however, when the context is duly considered. It is power that becomes important in conflictual situations, and it is influence that is central both in circumstances of conflict and in cooperative relations.

It is deemed crucial herewith to "extract" influence from the conception of power and consider it separately as, in principle, quantifiable and measurable unit of analysis. In contrast to nearly impossible measuring of "power", measurement of "influence" is, in principle, doable task, although not absolutely quantifiable – one has to admit. This is due to the twofold nature of influence, where one facet of impact may complement the other. That being said, influence can be not only *material* or *materially conceivable* (economic, technological, political, military), but also *normative* or *ideational* (social-cultural, ideological). Trade and economic, geoeconomic, geopolitical or military might (strength), just as the size of actor's (sovereign) territory and population (all of them termed herewith as "*material constructs*") is, on the one hand, keen on altering the preferences, strategies, status and behaviour of other actors. On the other hand, rules, norms, principles, values that are promoted by a certain international actor (termed herewith as "*normative constructs*") may wield substantive influence upon the preferences, status and behaviour of other actors, too. It shall be argued, however, that there hardly can be found cases, where "normative constructs" would have wielded influence without relying on the power of "material constructs", which is why we may assume that measuring – assessable – influence in terms of 'material constructs' entails a necessary and sufficient degree of reliability.

Techniques and indices vary across the field. For instance, Saaty and Khouja (1976) developed, in their *Measure of World Influence*, a multidimensional conception of influence, seen as perceived power of states. To measure influence of states in international politics, they devised a five-attributes matrix (Saaty and Khouja, 1976, p. 44–45), according to which influence consisted of: (1) human resources, (2) economic strength, or wealth, (3) technology, (4) trade, and (5) military strength. Then, expert judgment was used to determine attachable numeric value of particular attributes, which, on the whole, was meant to provide a diversified measure for ranking of states' influence potential. Certainly, these measures are only indicative and genuinely relative markers of states' influence potentials, even if, nowadays, extensive quantitative data will be used, along with expert judgments and qualitative assessments. It shall give, however, a very necessary in our case understanding of relative rankings and relationships between international actors, both states and international organisations, and thus allows one assume respective power capabilities.

For the purpose of our research, consideration of “*Politiczeskiy Atlas Sovremennosti*” [Contemporary Political Atlas]<sup>5</sup> index, “*ECFR's Foreign Policy Scorecards*”<sup>6</sup>, other *compound indices* (often titled as “power index” or “influence index”) may be very helpful, in addition to individual efforts at establishing, via separate calculation of each value in every particular case, of the very essential [*specific*] *potential influence indicators* (recalling the Saaty and Khouja's 1976 index conception):

- (1) human resources, or size of population (for IOs – a compound size of member states population numbers),
- (2) size of territory (for IOs – scope of territorial jurisdiction),
- (3) economic strength, or wealth,
- (4) technology and development trend,
- (5) trade index,
- (6) military strength.

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<sup>5</sup> Мельвиль, А.Ю. (ред.). (2007). Политический атлас современности: Опыт многомерного статистического анализа политических систем современных государств. Москва: МГИМО-Университет. Available online at: [http://mgimo.ru/files2/y04\\_2011/186294/politAtlas.pdf](http://mgimo.ru/files2/y04_2011/186294/politAtlas.pdf). Updated index and correlations also available online at: <http://worldpolities.org>.

<sup>6</sup> European Foreign Policy Scorecards are developed annually by the ECFR. The most recent version (ECFR Scorecard 2016) is available at: <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2016>.

Again, as in case with the model's "power" element, the "influence" element needs to be tailored to correspond with respective context and area of IR studies, and operationalized consequently in one of the aforementioned ways to convey a proper rationale of the studied "international role".

### The PIPP's "Presence" Element and "International Role" Concept

Power and influence alone are indicators of *potential actorness* that, moreover, cast an individualistic perspective and develop a particularistic understanding of relative (but not relational!) actor's status. In other words, power and influence indicators lack causality as far as cooperation between actors is concerned. Two considerably powerful and influential international actors will not necessarily cooperate if they lack substantial linkage – either interests or space shared. For instance, Australia will hardly choose the Andean Community as a partner for strategic cooperation for the simple reason of its "absence" in Latin America and the regional politics, and vice versa. Therefore, a "presence" is required which links actors either spatially or politically (including cultural and language politics).

Conventionally, "being *present* equals at least a symbolic form of existence or recognition" (Jørgensen, 2013, p. 91). Semantically, "presence" is a composite idea denoting: (a) the fact that someone or something is in a place, (b) a feeling that someone is still in a place although they are not there or are dead, (c) a group of police or soldiers that are watching or controlling a situation, and (d) a quality that makes people notice or admire you even when you are not speaking<sup>7</sup>. When "translated" from commonsensical into an academic language, the notion of presence may well denote a state of explicit and implicit existence in a given spatial area or issue domain, including the effect of some sort of existential resonance – a tolerated (recognized!) ability to wield both active and passive leverage via the exercise of normative authority, influence and controlling mechanisms. Hence, presence shall mean a lot more than mere existence.

In case with the *role-oriented perspective on actors' presence*, as developed within the current hypothesis, it is certainly not the existence of an actor as such which comes into question, but indeed its "existence" (visibility and feasibility) in either issue/policy or geographical areas, or in both. In this sense, "presence"

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<sup>7</sup> "Presence". *Cambridge Dictionary Online*. Available at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/presence>.

connotes both (1) a purposive external or international action<sup>8</sup>, and (2) an unintended consequence of domestic policy-making processes<sup>9</sup>.

In literature, the concept of "presence" was – just like the concepts of "actor" and "actorness" – developed for denoting IOs' growing salience and scope in international affairs. The analysis of the EU's presence was one of the first widely resonant conceptualisations of the Western Europe's international appearance (cf. e.g.: Allen and Smith, 1990). Allen and Smith (1990) introduced the concept of "presence" to explain the growing international salience of what was then EU-in-the-making, whereas avoiding pitfalls of defining the international activity of an actor that is not a state.

"Presence" can be traced in two ways – either (a) *geographically*, through physically shared spaces (*spatial presence*), or (b) *politically*, through detectable issue or policy linkages (*political presence*). In geographical terms, presence implies, therefore, actor's policy outreach to the (neighbouring) spatial area concerned. In policy/issue realm, actor's presence means its articulate and recognized position as a shaper of respective policies/issues in international (be it regional or global) dimension. In both cases it is indispensable for an actor to maintain a visible and feasible position to be considered as "present" in an issue or spatial area politics.

In *geographical terms*, "presence" can be assessed through various perspectives, including regional and area studies, or analytical approaches like shared spaces, (geographical) neighbourhood or cross-border politics.

For assessing "presence" in *issue/policy terms*, a concept of "*international practices*" may be seminally deployed. A burgeoning idea in the study of international relations, the concept of "international practices" pioneered in Adler and Pouliot's (2011a) piece in *International Theory* journal and got consolidated the same year in their edited book (Adler and Pouliot, 2011b). They contend that: "World politics can be conceived as structured by practices, which give meaning to international action, make possible strategic interaction, and are

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, presence as "purposive action" connotes what is similar to *active leverage* in international relations (an impact wielded by actor's activity in a given geographical or policy/issue area; mechanisms include: *socialization, persuasion, coercion*). For a more detailed analysis of active and passive leverage concepts, cf. Vachudova (2005).

<sup>9</sup> In this context, presence as "unintended consequence" connotes what is similar to *passive leverage* in international relations (an impact wielded by simple virtue of actor's existence, and the way it appears on the international stage; mechanisms include *emulation, mimicry, and learning*). For a more detailed analysis of active and passive leverage concepts, cf. Vachudova (2005).

reproduced, changed, and reinforced by international action and interaction” (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a, p. 1).

Explicitly differentiating between behaviour, action, and practice, Adler and Pouliot’s (2011a, p. 4) define international practices as “competent performances”, or more precisely, “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”.

As “socially organized activities that pertain to world politics, broadly construed” (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a, p. 6), international practices can feature, according to the authors (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a, p. 6–8), the following five essential dimensions and qualities:

- in some way, “practice is a *performance*”, that is action;
- “practice tends to be *patterned*, in that it generally exhibits certain regularities over time and space”;
- “practice is more or less *competent* in a socially meaningful and recognizable way”;
- “practice rests on *background knowledge*, which it embodies, enacts, and reifies all at once”;
- “practice weaves together the *discursive and material* worlds”.

The concept of presence, as assessed through the notion of “international practices”, allows one to also emphasize outside perceptions of actors in question as well as the significant effects they have on both psychological (normative) and operational (strategic-material) environments of counterparts or partners.

To fully agree with Jørgensen (1993, p. 221), the concept of presence is, in general, analytically beneficial for its deftness in “avoid[ing] both state-centric approaches and traditional concepts of power”. It also gets one off the hook of analysing IOs’ international performance in terms of sovereignty or supranationalism, as considered by Hill (1993, p. 309).

Accordingly, one may reasonably assume that “*presence*” is a *dichotomic variable*, which is either given or missing (true/false variable). To use the exemplary here, Smith’s (2014, p. 21) appeal for recognizing what is actually obvious in case of the EU’s considerable “presence” in international affairs, it would be reasonable to maintain that “other international actors cannot fail to notice its resources, and its internal policies (such as its agricultural or monetary policies) affect other international actors”. Consequently, it is not about recognizing but rather about noticing or failing to notice actor’s presence which results in either confirmation or denial of the concept. Confirmation of either manifestation

of "presence" (geographical *or* political) results into the indicator "true". With geographical "presence" not given, political "presence" should be established by using the method of *strategic* (issue *and* actor-system) *narrative analysis*.

### The PIPP's "Performance" Element and "International Role" Concept

"Performance" is a multi-level concept and paradigm of actorness. Performance perspective on an actor is interested in what the actor *does* rather than deliberating on what it *is*. In choosing a strategic partner, it is not only important to select a powerful and influential actor, but also vital to target a credible one – the one which creates the effect of its "presence" in a policy or geographical area through the actions, the performance, in fact.

Just like in case with the concepts of "actor" and "actorness", or "presence", the term "performance" has been invented to conceptualize and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the IOs' functioning. Back in 2010, *The Review of International Organizations* (Springer) published a special issue on the politics of international organisations' performance (*IOP*) (cf. Gutner and Thompson, 2010b). In this special issue, Gutner and Thompson (2010a) presented an analytical framework for studying performance of international organisations, which they understand as both outcomes and process that, in turn, help one think of different ways to measure it. "Performance" shall be regarded thus as an ability to fulfil an obligation or task, including the manner in which a task is completed. In Gutner and Thompson's (2010a, p. 231) wording, "to address the issue of performance, as applied to the social world, is to address both the *outcomes* produced and the *process* – the effort, efficiency and skill – by which goals are pursued by an individual or organization" (emphasis added). They see the *sources of performance* in the interplay of internal and external, and social and material factors as follows:

**Table 2.** The Sources of Performance

	Internal	External
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organizational culture</li> <li>– Leadership deficit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Competing norms</li> <li>– lack of consensus on problem</li> </ul>
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inadequate, staffing, resource</li> <li>– Bureaucratic/career self-interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Power politics among member states</li> <li>– Incoherent mandates</li> <li>– On-the-ground constraints</li> </ul>

Source: Gutner and Thompson (2010a, p. 239).

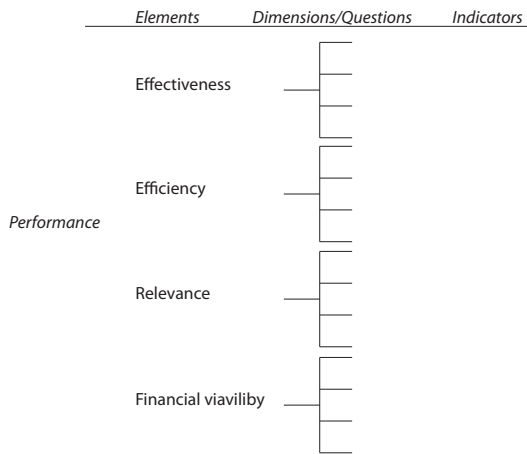
Another step in the development of the “performance” concept was taken quite recently, with the Jørgensen and Laatikainen’s (2013) edited volume on the EU *and* international institutions from a tripartite perspective of performance, policy and power, with seminal contributions made by Gutner and Thompson (2013) on the framework of analysis of performance of IOs. Concurrently, Oberthür, Jørgensen, and Shahin (2013) went a step further in their same-year published volume and examined the performance of the EU *in* international institutions. Although the idea emerged some decade earlier, in 1998 (Jørgensen, 1998), these were namely these two analytical attempts, made in 2010 and 2013, respectively, that have pioneered the development and marked the rise of the “performance” concept. Therefore, the latter ones will be substantially drawn as an authoritative source for the construction of the notion within our research project.

The concept is indeed deployed in many instances of social life and interaction, but is hardly well developed in the social sciences, perhaps with the exception of organizational and business studies, where it is one of the core concepts. Not surprisingly, therefore, that Jørgensen, Oberthür, and Shahin (2013, p. 4) suggested building the conceptualization of “performance” particularly on two literatures – that on international regimes (IR), and organizational performance (Economics, particularly Organizational and Business Studies, as well as Public Administration). Jørgensen (2013, p. 88) admits that while “[t]here is a casual use of the concept everywhere”, the research on the notion of “performance” is rather “characterized by severe limits”. Moreover, much of the literature referring to the idea of performance analyses it in a general fashion, often without an explicit elaboration on the concept and its apparatus. Born in 1998 (Jørgensen, 1998), the concept is still widely misunderstood and misused. It is, *first*, misunderstood as a dichotomic indicator of either success or failure, which is “measured” by observance. *Second*, it is sometimes mixed up with the notion of influence, which is a related – but different – concept. *Third*, the concept of “performance’ is (like ‘role’) frequently used in the passing” (Jørgensen 2013, p. 89), i.e. without a substantial conceptualization or reference to an established strand of theorizing the notion.

Jørgensen (2013, p. 89) offers to unpack the concept of “performance” by: *first*, clearly delineating the concepts and measures of performance, influence, and impact; *second*, specifying the exact meaning attributed to the concept (i.e. major dimensions, key characteristics); and, *third*, developing a measurement matrix. Drawing on Lusthaus, Adrien, Anderson, Carden, and Montalván



(2002), Jørgensen (2013, p. 90) also offers to assess the concept of performance as a composite notion and approach, which is seen in the literature as a sort of “pragmatic consensus position” on an indeed very contested concept. Accordingly, performance is “unpacked” as a composite notion consisting of *four core elements* (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, financial viability), each of which is, in turn, further differentiated into a range of dimensions, with their respective indicators, as presented by a tree-structure of the concept below:



**Figure 3.** Analytical framework of performance

Source: Jørgensen (2013, p. 90).

Apparently, the compositing concepts are contested ideas themselves, and it is necessary to take a rationally-reduced-scope stance on all of them to make assessment and measurement as easy and productive as possible.

Jørgensen (2013, p. 91) offers to assess *effectiveness* as an actor’s ability to achieve the declared objectives. In another study, Jørgensen et al. (2013, p. 6) admit that assessing “goal achievement itself is likely to raise important challenges”, not least because “objectives can be so broad as to render nearly meaningless for an assessment”.

*Efficiency* is to be understood as “the achievement-cost ratio, relative to other performing organisations” (Jørgensen, 2013, p. 92).

*Relevance* can be defined as “the degree to which key stake-holders consider the [actor in question] a relevant performing organisation, no matter how [this international organisation] is represented” (Jørgensen, 2013, p. 93). In this vein,

relevance correlates with what is assumed by capacity for strategic interaction as a composite element of the “strategic actor” notion. Jørgensen et al. (2013, p. 4) consider relevance against the interplay of such actor-related features as (a) unity, (b) representation and delegation mode, and (c) coordination model. In fact, they treat relevance as actorness as such. In our context, relevance has to be rather seen as an impact an actor is able to generate or actually generates against the backdrop of its goal-oriented international activity. In this vein, relevance is an attribute of strategic actorness capacity [in contrast to Jørgensen’s (2013, p. 93) and Jørgensen et al.’s (2013, p. 4) more simplistic understanding of relevance as an – ordinary or conventional – actorness capacity]. Actor’s *ability* to (1) extract and (2) mobilise resources, (3) to relate them to (4) its objectives and to (5) a general strategic narrative, and (6) to adapt its strategy in light of changes in the global arena is to be regarded herewith as a relevance feature (indicator). *Inability* to (1) extract and (2) mobilise resources, (3) to relate them to (4) its objectives and to (5) a general strategic narrative, and (6) to adapt its strategy in light of changes in the global arena implies a reason to assess an actor as strategically irrelevant, a non-strategic actor. That being said, a relevance perspective on an actor derives from our inherent interest in actor’s further qualities, not in its primary characterization as an actor (or not). Consequently, the relevance indicator is dichotomic: actor either is a strategic (strategically relevant) performer on the international stage, i.e. an interested and capable player, or it is an impotent actor, i.e. a non-performer, laggard, free-rider or “passive actor” in a given geographical or issue area (strategically irrelevant).

Finally, the concept of *financial/resource viability* regards the balance between budgets available and assigned tasks (declared goals).

These are indeed IOs that are primarily targeted with the idea of performance. Many problems modern states and societies are confronted with have an interdependent and transnational character, which makes states increasingly rely on international organisations for policy solutions. As Gutner and Thompson (2010a, p. 228) reasonably argue, for most IOs, “performance is the path to legitimacy, and thus our ability to understand performance – what it is and where it comes from – is crucial”. Performance indicators are also relevant for assessing states’ actorness and “deliverability” on domestic problem-solving, especially in view of incrementally stronger public audit and external pressures. Performance is therefore a path to both IOs and states legitimacy.

Obviously, performance of states and IOs varies extensively, as does the performance within the actors’ own environments. While some actors are highly



For performance to be deemed satisfactory or successful, a combination of the first group's positive and second group's negative ( $RE^+FE^-$ ) or both positive ( $RE^+FE^+$ ) indicators is presupposed. Negative value of the first group indicators results in non-satisfactory performance level in either possible combination with the second group indicators ( $RE^-FE^+$  or  $RE^-FE^-$ ).

On the one hand, *relevance* (strategic actorness) and *effectiveness* (strategic goals attainment) can be qualitatively assessed through strategic (both issue and actor-system) narratives analysis. The confirmatory or true value of both indicators ( $RE^+$ ) is to be axiomatically presupposed, yet these are mutually determining – strategic goals attainment can hardly proceed without the activation of strategic actorness, just as the latter one is “destined” to pursue the former one. In turn, the false value of both indicators ( $RE^-$ ) is to be presumed even when only one indicator has been established to be negative – yet, in this case, it neglects the relevance of the other: what is then strategic actorness worth, if the quintessential goals cannot be attained (to a greater or lesser degree of success)? Sources to be used for assessing the *RE*-indicators are, among others, agendas, manifestos, annual reports, public surveys regarding institutional trust and other performance-related indicators, expert assessments, opinionnaires, etc.

On the other hand, *financial/resource viability* (general and specific budgets, public debts, human, material and immaterial resources) and *efficiency* (cost-benefit ratio) can also be assessed jointly, since these criteria apparently very closely connected. Quantitative data pertaining to budgetary allowances, just as the audit data and expert assessments, provide a useful source for measuring these indicators. *ECFR Scorecards* (e.g. 2016 edition: <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2016>) or other metrics systems may offer additional source of data on major states' and some IOs' performance (limitation: Europe, Middle East, North Africa, China). The visualization may be deployed in a form of “spider performance charts”, as commonly used in the field and specifically recommended by Jørgensen (2013, p. 88–89) for the case of performance analysis. Positive evaluation of both indicators ( $FE^+$ ) is to be asserted even in case if at least one is positive. In turn, two negative indicators result in a false compound value ( $FE^-$ ).

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## "PIPP" ANALYTICAL MODEL: SAMPLE APPLICATION

Unlike some earlier approaches that tend to absolutize the measurement of power [see e.g. Nye's (2011, p. 10) example, as aforementioned] and nearly escape measurement of international role, the PIPP-analytical model departs from relative (ratio) assessments of each of four of "international role" constitutive elements in its attempt to measure the latter one. As a sample application case in this article has been selected the *Ukraine–United States* dyad to exemplify whether and why political platitudes of power vs powerlessness may be quite justified in these *two country cases* with the *reference year 2014*. One of them, i.e. the US, has been consistently called, since the collapse of the bipolar world system, "the lonely superpower" (Huntington, 1999), the other one, i.e. Ukraine, has been recently termed "a cusp state" in the 2014 collective study on the role, position and agency of this-type states in international relations (Herzog and Robins, 2014). The theoretically-informed analysis of collected actual data on both states, as shown in *Table 3* below, appears to perfectly confirm such terming, for all U.S.' PIPP-indicators considerably outweigh those of Ukraine, the latter epitomizing only one-seventh of the international role capacity shown by the former. Based on the strategic actorness scale as presented in *Table 1* above, Ukraine's international role with its PIPP-score 0,13 barely managed to fall within the scope of moderate strategic actors (middle powers, range 0,10–0,50), whereas the U.S.' international role pioneers the PIPP-scale with its near-max 0,88 score<sup>11</sup>, thus profiling itself as a key strategic actor (superpower, range 0,80–1,00).

Both actors' comparative performance in international affairs, i.e. their roles, can be illustrated with the help of SPSS statistical analysis and visualization tools, as follows (cf. *Figures 5* and *6*). Thereby, the means of each PIPP-element are weighted and cumulated into the compound area of Ukraine's and U.S.' international actorness.

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<sup>11</sup> Given that the current comparison is between two states only, the bigger indicator becomes the MAX indicator by default, accounting for the integral number (1). With three or more comparative cases, the same logic applies – the maximum among indicators becomes the reference point equalling one (1) on the 0–1 scale.

**Table 3.** PIPP-metrical data and Ukraine's vs U.S.' international role measurement

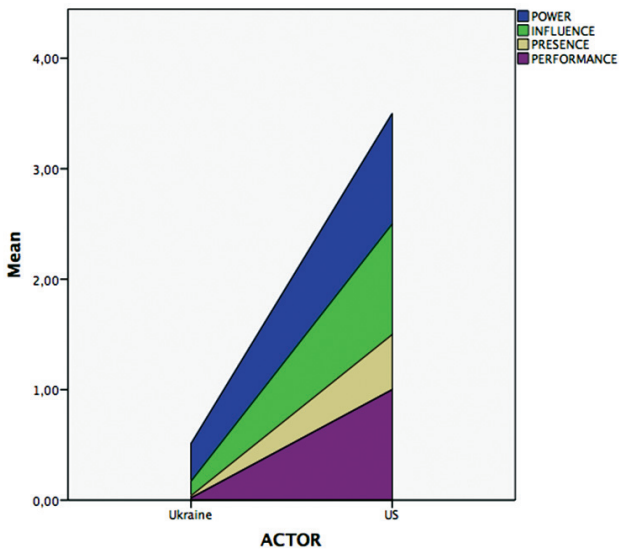
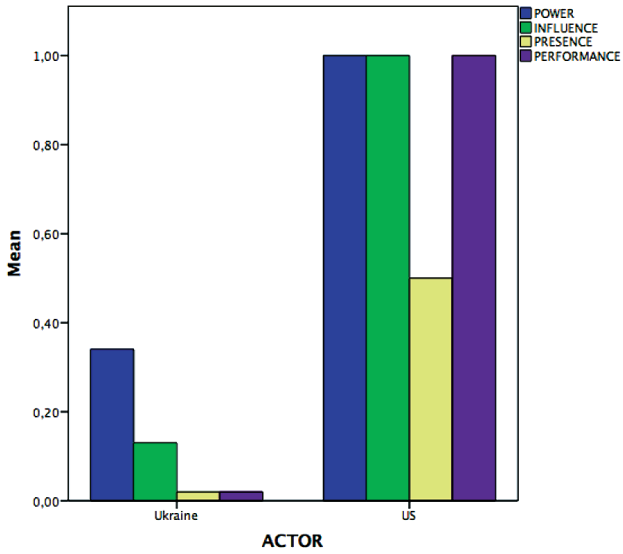
ACTOR	Ukraine	US	Ukraine : US ratio
<b>POWER<sup>a)</sup></b>			
power_status	2	3	0,67
power_type	2	4	0,5
<b>INFLUENCE<sup>b)</sup></b>			
inf_population	45362900	318857056	0,14
inf_territory	603,55	9857,31	0,06
inf_GDP	131805	17419000	0,008
inf_GDPshare	0,17	22,38	0,008
inf_GDPgrowth	0	2,4	0
inf_hitech	2189	147833	0,015
inf_milexpend	4033	609914	0,007
inf_milGDP	3,1	3,5	0,87
inf_IPI	0,59	10	0,059
<b>PRESENCE<sup>c)</sup></b>			
pres_geo	0	0	0
pres_pol	1	1	1
pres_GPI	45,51	1099,63	0,041
<b>PERFORMANCE<sup>d)</sup></b>			
perf_strategic	384	11901	0,032
perf_effect	2	3	0,67
<b>INT_ROLE<sup>e)</sup></b>	<b>0,13</b>	<b>0,88</b>	<b>0,15 (1 : 7)</b>

Legend: PIPP index calculation formulas:

- POWER = (power\_status/MAX(power\_status)) x (power\_type/MAX(power\_type))
- INFLUENCE = SUM(i1-i9/MAX(i1-i9))/9, where: i1 = inf\_population and so forth to i9 = inf\_IPI
- PRESENCE = SUM(pres\_geo + pres\_pol) x (pres\_GPI/MAX(pres\_GPI))
- PERFORMANCE = (perf\_strategic/MAX(perf\_strategic)) x (perf\_effect/MAX(perf\_effect))
- INT\_ROLE = SUM(POWER,INFLUENCE,PRESENCE,PERFORMANCE)/4

Source: Author's own compilation.

The extension of the sample on further case studies (countries), as well as temporal extension (both up to the year 2014, and trend-based forecast data beyond that year), can help contextualise dynamics in states' international actor-ness, especially in view of more dynamic indicators of influence and performance, as compared to more stable and predictable power and presence indices. It goes without saying that the model can be extrapolated to non-state actors, such as international organizations, the collection of data on which, however, may present a bigger challenge in view of information available.



**Figures 5 and 6.** SPSS-based PIPP-metrical analysis of Ukraine’s vs U.S.’ international role  
 Source: Author’s own compilation.

## CONCLUSIONS

As revealed, the notion of “international role” is one of the frequently used and misused concepts in IR/political theory as well as in public and political discourses. The linguistic-semantic conceptual analysis proves to be failing to address the complex phenomenon of “role” actors play in world politics. “Role conceptions” and “role expectations”, part of the normative analytical apparatus, show their short-livedness and insufficiency in disentangling the concept, especially when put into the real-life politics environment. The latter one, as evidenced from the herewith selected context of strategic partnerships studies between the states and international organizations, shows that actors look inasmuch for status of their would-be partners (role conceptions, role perceptions), as they pursue a scrupulous selection of reliable cooperative links (role expectations, role performance). Thus, a whole array of defining elements feeds into the sometimes simplistically deployed term and idea of an international role. This explains why not power alone is considered when selecting a potential partner from the variety of actors in international relations. One may detect strategic partnerships between NATO or the US and Serbia, the EU or NATO with Russia and China, along with the EU-Chilean or EU-Azerbaijani partnership platforms, etc. Incremental interdependence and rise of non-state actors as world shapers do indeed complicate the picture and broaden the “*menu of actors for choice*”, to paraphrase Russett and Starr (1992). Not all of them are super-powerful, but even the seemingly least powerful dare to duly play their “international role”. Nye Jr. (2010) succinctly put it in this regard: “Conventional wisdom holds that the state with the largest army prevails, but in the information age, the state (or the non-state actor) with the best story may sometimes win”.

To capture such a complexity of the “international role” phenomenon, this article suggested a PIPP-analytical model to both close the gap in the “role theory” in IR and suggest methodological approaches for empirical analysis of the notion. Such a quad-element conception should allow to better analytically grasp the appearance and performing of actors as would-be or actual strategic partners, as well as assess “international role” in other instances of international interactions. It also allows to better (more inclusively) capture the practice of strategic partnerships, and international cooperation between states and IOs, considering potentials and exercises of both passive and active leverages, just as much as ability to hold credible commitments, that is crucial in the assertion of a strategic actor and, eventually, of a strategic partner.



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