

Will american hegemony produce a better world for everybody?

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Hegemony is defined as leadership, predominance, especially of one society over another. Encarta dictionary defines it as Control or dominating influence by one person or group especially over society or one nation over others. Referring to America, Stanly D. Brunn pointed out “ the world’s single remaining superpower is the accountable hegemon” (p. 36). Every one would agree that the United States maintains its status as the only remaining superpower in the world though perhaps economically Japan and the rest of the G7 member countries are at par with the US.

However many would disagree if one would say, ‘ the U. S. remains the world’s police,’ and much more if one would add “ a good policeman indeed. ” Thus the question ‘ Well American Hegemony Produce a better World for Everybody poses an important analysis of the role of the United States in the global community. But in the realist perspective, they see that the American attitudes towards international order is unstable not because of any special malign characteristic but because of the inherent insecurity that unequal power confers on weaker states.

Michael Cox, Timothy Dunne, and Ken Booth pointed out their argument, “ In anarchic orders, weaker states are threatened by extreme concentrations of power and will seek protection in counter-hegemonic groupings” (p. 193). But this has been debated issue as some contends that the American unipolarity is a highly durable political order. Cox, Dunne, and Booth argued that the American order is built on power.

They point out “ the extended system of American-led security protection in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, is an essential element of this order and it

can only be sustained by dominant military capabilities, which in turn depends on continuing American economic and technological strength" (p. 193). Realism like any other ism such as naturalism and liberalism is a philosophical position, therefore cannot be subjected to the test of falsifiability or cannot be proved or disproved. Benjamin Frankel point out that realism viewed peace as the result of power equilibrium than a cessation of conflicting ambition (p.

6). They regard society as basically conflictive and the struggle for power among rival groups is a fundamental condition of human existence (Frankel, p. 6) Frankel cited that there is a differing position within realism. He noted that realist believed that human beings were driven by lust for power, while the rest including him, regarded power as essentially instrumental to and necessary for the achievement of othergoals such as security and even liberal ideals (Frankel, p. 6). The American Hegemony American hegemony has been interpreted in some ways.

Demetrios Caraley quoting the words of The Economist stated, " The united states bestrides the globe like a colossus. It dominates business, commerce, and communications; its economy is the world's most successful, its military might second to none" (p. 105). Caraley also cited French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine arguing that the United States had gone beyond its superpower status of the twentieth. He said " U. S. supremacy today extends to the economy, currency, military areas, lifestyle, language and the products of massculture that inundate the world, forming thought and fascinating even the enemies of the United States" (Frankel, p.

105). The American hegemony was also seen in the context of globalization. Caraley noted the statements of two American triumphalists stating, "Today's international system is built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony" (p. 105). Globalization is seen simply a disguise for American imperialism. American hegemony has been described as "hyper power" and is not comparable, in terms of power and influence, to any thing known in modern history. G. John Ikenberry point out that hegemony is not just material power capabilities, and hegemonic order cannot be assured simply by a preponderance of such capabilities.

He emphasized that a " leader needs followers and acquiescence of these followers is only achieved if the leader is seen as legitimate" (Ikenberry, p. 18) Quoting Michael Mastanduno, Ikenberry pointed out " Mastanduno argues that the United States has succeeded in establishing at least a partial hegemonic in East Asia" (Ikenberry, p. 18). The Realist view of Hegemony Realist held that only economically and militarily powerful nation-states qualifies as a hegemon since the use of power or economic sanctions against non-cooperating parties, is regarded as part of the game.

Garrit Stratmann points out that this view hold that " a hegemon has to exercise hegemony over subordinated countries within its sphere of influence" (p. 37). In other words, though hegemony still reflects the preeminent position of a hegemonic actor, but does not necessarily imply dominance rather it is referred to as leadership. Thus, according to Stratmann in the realist view of hegemony, the focus is on the hegemon's role " in mitigating collective action problems through the provisions of

leadership over other donors and the creation of positive incentives to cooperate, e.

g. by assuming a larger share of the costs to set up and maintain a cooperative infrastructure” (37). The realist argues that hegemony of one state provides a benefit for all by providing collective goods to all. Realist maintains that domination is always associated with coercion, state power, and indeed force, and hegemony remains consistently identified with equilibrium, persuasion, consolidation, and consent. Stuart Croft and Phil Williams cited Antonio Gramsci’s definition of hegemony which

“ stresses the explanatory importance of ideas - that this voluntary submission by one party to another is predicated on the belief, right or wrong, that all parties will benefit from the interaction between the weak and the strong, even though it is important to emphasize that they might not recognize this act as submissive, nor may they recognize that the outcome might indeed be a hegemonic relationship” (68). Will the American Hegemony Produce a Better World in Realist Perspective? There are many factors that lead to a yes answer to the question above.

It has been partly discussed above that the United State’s hegemony has been qualified, as the U. S. has succeeded in establishing partial hegemonic in East Asia. Further more, based on the definition and explanation of what hegemony is and the role of the hegemony in the international community of nation, it appears that indeed the American hegemony meets the requirement to produce a better world for everybody. The biggest threat to

humanity to be able live a better life in a better world was the threat of communism prior to the collapsed of the Soviet Union.

But with fall of Communism, it is now the evil of terrorism that brought real danger and fear worldwide. The political and social condition of life is no longer threatened by oppression but by the evil of terrorism, which only America can control. Michael Byers and Georg Nolte Noted that the concept of a "community by superpower is very popular in US international relations theory" (64) which promotes relations rather than dominion. In the realist view, state values of traditional international law prevail over community values such as human rights or sustainable development.

Chrystalla A. Ellina noted that the "realist view of states as autonomous entities defined by geographical boundaries and distinctly separating domestic and foreign policy is incongruent with supra national policy" Realist argues that order is a result of the concentration of material power capabilities in a single state, which uses its commanding position to create and maintain order. In a sense, realist's view of hegemony is somewhat apprehensive as they tend to be suspicious of the real intention of the hegemonic nation. Paul J.

D'Anieri asserts that Realist contends, "Great powers pursue hegemony in order to create a world order to favorable to themselves, and often exploitative to others" (p. 218) Jonathan Joseph point out that in the realist View, hegemony can only operate under conditions of social and material causality. Joseph cited "It is necessary to examine the social whole and its different structures and mechanisms, each of which has its own dynamics"

(p. 126). However they admit that only militarily and economically strong nation is capable of being a hegemon.

Since the only remaining superpower militarily and economically is the United States, it follows that American hegemony is legitimate and is capable to produce a better world for every body to live. The American use of power in the war against Iraq and against the Taliban forces maybe viewed as an attempt of global domination, but it is quite clear that threat of terrorism has been the main object the war. The world will never be safe with the terrorist around. The war on terror, which the US initiated, has put the world in a better and safer condition.

Further more the benefit of globalization, democracy, and continues advancement of technology being carried out by the United States continues to make life easier. What the realist wanted to see actually in the American hegemony is that it should be able to provide benefit for weaker nations by providing collective goods to all. The US assistance in rebuilding European economies during the cold war era and its commitment for peace in the Middle East proves that the United States is working towards improving the world's political and social condition.

On the other hand, the problem that could be pointed out in the American hegemony is the concepts of democracy, which is associated with liberalization. It has been viewed that the American export of democracy and economic liberalization is imperialism, Americanizing its subject nations. Nevertheless, American democracies placed more values to human lives and

give more protection and respect both for life and the basic rights of the individual.

Realist maybe right that the American unipolar status may not last long but it may not be based on the dominant view that it is unstable and cannot but in time produce competition for the mantle of hegemon. John A. Agnew, Stuart Cordbridge admits that “ there are a number of candidates for international ‘ primacy’ available to replace the United States as Number One unless it acts decisively to prevent this” (130). Realist is not at all against hegemony or the American hegemony but just believe that society is basically conflictive.

It means that they also recognize American hegemony as no one can dispute that the US is the only remaining superpower. The realist assertion that hegemony means equilibrium or the balance of power does not certainly mean equal benefit or equal strength. They perhaps simply mean equal opportunity or equal protection, which is guaranteed in the American democracy. Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer, and Volker Rittberger stated, “ Realist theories of regimes emphasize relative power capabilities as a central explanatory variable and stress states sensitivity to distributional aspects of cooperation and regimes” (84).

Hasenclever , Mayer, and Rittberger emphasized the realist teaches that the states are the most important actors on the world scene which act out of self-interest in an anarchical environment, without needing to renounce the liberal insights that state are able to realize common interests through cooperation and use international institutions to this ends” (83) Regardless

of this statement, T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann pointed out that “ all realism agree on several fundamental assumptions about the nature of international politics” (104) It means that realist recognized some action by the state as a legitimate.

Paul, Wirtz, and Fortmann noted that realist also believes that international politics are state centric, because politics are about relations between organized social groups and states are the primary organized groups in the modern world. Therefore the move to rid the world of international terrorist maybe state centric as it is triggered by the 7/11 terrorist attacked but it can also be in the realm of international politics as it was later joined by many other countries in an effort to subdue the international terrorist. Furthermore, based on the realist doctrines above, the U. S.

led crusade against systematic mass extinction of people under a tyrannical rule that led to war against Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein can still be viewed as part of the international politics, which aim to produce a better world for everybody to live. With all the effort of the United States to bring economic rehabilitation in Europe under the Truman Doctrine, the effort to bring peace in the Middle East by trying to mediate in Palestinian conflict, and the US effort to rid the world of the threat of terrorism; I can definitely say the American hegemony was able to produce a better world for everybody.

Though the realist view seems to run counter on the concept of hegemony yet there are some areas that realist agrees to the hegemonic ideas. It is in this agreement therefore that the discussion in this paper was based.

Realism maybe extreme in their doctrine about hegemony, power, and the community but they provided a political mirror by which the hegemonic states can be judge whether their actions are still within incongruent with hegemony. Work Cited Agnew, John and Corbridge. Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy.

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