

Aalborg University

Development and International Relations

# Understanding “Hegemony” in International Relations Theories

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis analyzes the concept of hegemony in the field of international relations. Commonly viewed and understood from different angles, the concept of hegemony appears to be fragmented and limited to philosophical and theoretical standpoints one has. Thus, this thesis attempted to comprehensively compare conceptualizations and understandings of the concept placed in different theories.

Three theories of international relations were chosen for a comparative method: neo-realism, neo-liberalism and neo-Gramscianism. The thesis took use of the constructive paradigm with a relativist ontology and subjective epistemology. Firstly, the chosen theories are reviewed in terms of their basic assumptions and philosophical considerations, further incorporating the concept of hegemony into review. Commonalities and varying differences of the theories are highlighted. In addition, this thesis includes empirical data collected from secondary sources to illustrate explanations of American hegemony through the different theories' standpoints.

The conception of hegemony is found to differ in two principal terms: actors who pursue hegemony and underlying conditions to establish and maintain hegemony. States are potential hegemony in neo-liberal and neo-realist theories, while neo-Gramscian state includes civil society as well. In terms of conditions for hegemony, a couple of variables dominate in theories: hard power in neo-realism, soft power in neo-liberalism and mixture of the two in neo-Gramscian theory along with social forces.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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The concept of hegemony gained theoretical significance with Antonio Gramsci and his work of *Prison Notebooks*. Before him, hegemony was used as a reference to asymmetrical power relations. Since then, the term gained popularity within various academic disciplines and is being incorporated into various levels. It has gained popularity in fields like anthropology, sociolinguistics, literary and cultural studies, and colonial and neo-colonial studies. The International relations (IR) field is not an exception and the term is used across different theories, ranging from cultural to global hegemony. (Fontana, 2005)

Much of today's press and scholarly work in IR is focused on the United States (US) hegemony. Although it seems that the US power and influence in international system is apparent for the majority, contemporary opinion holds that the US hegemony has been declining over the years (Brown & Ainley, 2005). This further presents a contradiction between scholars, while some say that the US hegemony is here to stay and will continue to do so, others claim that it is declining and will not last.

For the first point political scientists, historians, and policymakers such as G. John Ikenberry state that from the end of the Cold War, the US has emerged as an unmatched and unprecedented global superpower. He also says that in modern history there was not a single state to loom so large over the rest of the world (Ikenberry J. , 2003). Historian Paul Kennedy also maintains that it would be difficult for a statistician to compile lists of the fields in which the US is leading and that for him there is no point in the Europeans or Chinese wringing their hands about US predominance, while wishing for it to go away (Brooks, 2008). Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger considers that the US is having superiority unrivaled by even the most powerful empires of the past. He also claims that the US has an unparalleled ascendancy around the globe in fields such as weaponry, entrepreneurship, science, technology, higher education and popular culture (Schuster, 2001).

A number of analysts consider that American hegemony is continuing. Susan Strange (Strange, Still an Extraordinary Power: America's Role in a Global Monetary System, 1982) uses the following name for the title in her article, *Still an Extraordinary Power: America's Role in a Global Monetary*

System which makes her opinion clear. In another article, *The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony*, Strange considers the suggestion that American hegemony is at an end 'a destructive myth' that can induce only pessimism, despair, and the conviction that in these circumstances, the only course of action is to ignore everyone else and look after your own individual interest (Strange, 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony, 1987). Bruce M. Russett, in his article *The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony; or, Is Mark Twain Really Dead?*, dismissed any conclusion that the US has lost its hegemonic leadership capacity by considering it premature (Russett B. M., 1985). In the book, "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power", Joseph Nye negates the fact any fundamental change has occurred in American power (Nye J. , 1990). According to Nye, American power in the 1970's only went back to its 1932 hegemonic position from the dominance it had during the immediate postwar period, which, as a direct result of the war, was going to correct itself at some point anyway. In his book *The Myth of America's Decline: Leading the World Economy into the 1990s*, Henry R. Nau considers that the continuity in American hegemony is underlying the expansion of political and economic liberalism during the 1980s. He considers that the search for democratic freedom and market values in the Ex-Communist Eastern Europe is an indication of the ongoing domination of American cultural hegemony (Nau, 1990).

Altman and Hass among others, who consider that in the early years of the 21 century the US was coming after a decade of economic bloom and fiscal health during the 1990's, the national debt at around 35 percent of the gross domestic product and the hegemonic position of the US was at its peak. However, after the events of September 11 2001, a reaction was triggered within the government entering in two costly military interventions (Iraq and Afghanistan), the Iraq war itself, costing around 3 trillion dollars, while the two wars combined represent 10 to 15 percent of the country's annual deficit. This has harmed the country's image and its fiscal health (Altman, 2010). Adam Quinn considers that the main ingredient for the prospect of decline is dire fiscal outlook (Quinn, 2011).

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that cumulative deficits through 2020 will be around 9.5 trillion dollars and that federal debt, which in 2010 was 62 percent of gross domestic product, is likely to be 90 percent of the gross domestic product in 2020, 110 per cent in 2025 and 180 per cent in 2035. The above mentioned data suggests that the US will not be able to fund and upgrade its

military in the future, whether caused by forcefully applied austerity or public pressure to reduce government spending. (Quinn, 2011)

Other analysts have outlined American power in terms which suggest a relative or absolute decline. Robert Keohane talks about co-operation and discord in his book *After Hegemony*, and utilizes phrases such as 'a post-hegemony world' and 'the legacy of American hegemony' (Keohane R. , *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, 1984). In the book *America as an Ordinary Country*, Richard N. Rosecrance says that America's “*role as maintainer of the system is at an end*” (1976, p. 1). Also, Robert Gilpin considers that, “*By the 1980s Pax Americana was in a state of disarray.*” (Gilpin R. , 1975, p. 231). Immanuel Wallerstein referred to the end to American hegemony specifically in 1967 with a starting point in 1945 (Wallerstein, 1984). Paul Kennedy assesses that the American hegemonic collapse was based on the imperial US 'overstretching' itself (Kennedy, 1987).

As presented scholarly work outlines, literature and research available present different approaches of analysis and conclusions on the presence or decline of the US hegemony. It is puzzling and thus a question arises: what is a hegemon? How is hegemony conceptualized and what basic principles and assumptions does it hold?

The classical schools of thought in IR all seem to have a common feature when conceptualizing hegemony – theories seem to agree that a hegemon exercises a certain degree of power or influence among other states, but it always excludes the hegemon's direct control of other states, such as colonialism. However, despite this understanding of hegemony, schools of IR remain fragmented when constituting hegemony. The neo-liberal approach of hegemony places the focus on the mechanisms of operation and conditions of hegemony, instead of focusing on hegemon as a subject (as the conventional approach does). The neo-Gramscian approach, for instance, suggests looking at hegemony from a different perspective, shifting from a state-centric towards a social constructivist approach. The radical approach to hegemony, inspired by post-structuralism, is individual centric, as opposed to the realist approach (Konrad, 2012).

Having divergent opinions on the concept of hegemony raises a question on why and how the opinions differ. And, subsequently, is there any evidence to support certain claims of the scholars;

or is it the basic assumptions of the school of thought they represent that are reflected without even reconsidering these assumptions` validity?

As it will be discussed later in this paper, certain schools of thought are emphasizing the basic assumptions of the theory they represent and that is reflected in their study of hegemony. And even though the traditional theories of IR present a useful way of understanding hegemony when looking through different lenses of IR, the concept of hegemony remains fragmented and contradictory when comparing different approaches (Antoniades, 2008).

Literature available on comprehensive analysis differences and commonalities of different conceptions of hegemony in different schools of thought in IR seems limited. The research available seems to focus on criticism on conceptualizations, rather than a production of clear distinguishing features of each conceptualization. This gap in the literature inspired the authors of this paper to attempt to fill this gap and seek to analyze the notion more in depth. Thus, the aim of this paper is to conduct **a comparative analysis of the concept of hegemony in IR with a specific focus on realism, liberalism and Gramscian scholarship.**

The aim set for this paper requires a detailed analysis of the schools of thought in order to grasp the essence of each school`s assumptions and views towards reality and truth. Only when these are understood in general terms, one can move to more specific studies of conception of hegemony, and, further, to historical facts and case studies. Subsequently, this paper will cover the following topic: *Comparative analysis of realism, liberalism and Gramscian approaches of hegemony.*

To structure this paper towards the topic and problem presented above, some research questions were put in place:

- How do various schools of IR define and understand hegemony?
- How do the different approaches to hegemony support historical events and how do they explain it?

To be able to find a solution for the above research questions, this paper is structured in certain steps that were taken throughout its` length and presented in the figure 1 below.

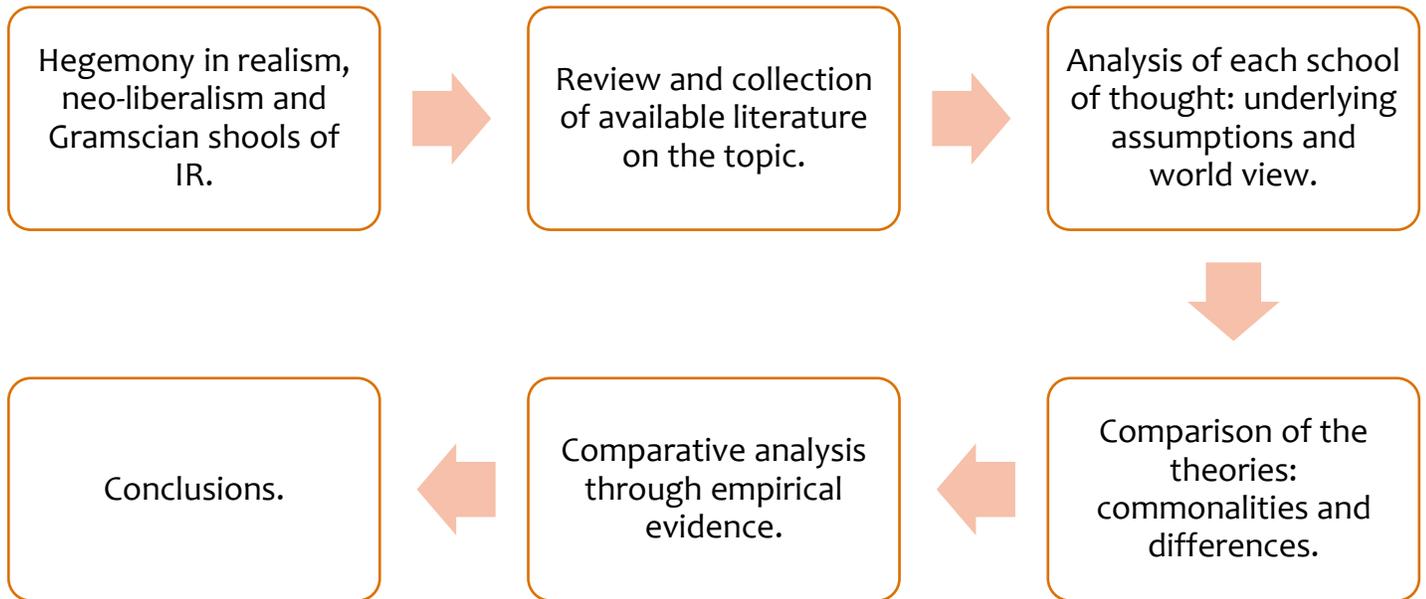


Figure 1 Conceptual flow of the paper

Firstly, existing approaches to studying hegemony will be discussed. Additionally, the existing literature on the fragmented study of hegemony will be reviewed. Subsequently it will uncover the contradicting and intertwining principles of hegemony of the different approaches. The approaches will then be put into analytical comparison. Finally, once the theoretical basis of the approaches is in place, an attempt to test applicability of the approaches to historical events through the application of empirical data will be presented. It will further lead this paper towards answering the problem formulation and reaching certain conclusions.

Since different approaches of hegemony studies tend to focus on certain parameters or basic assumptions, it is rather impossible to uncover and understand the whole phenomena of hegemony itself as there is no single truth. The aim of this paper is not to find truth, but to compare the existing approaches of hegemony studies, attempting to present the underlying variations and commonalities of hegemony in different theories.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

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Studies of the international system have been the central topic of IR with attempts to explain and understand the nature of international order. Thus, concepts like hegemony, empire, dominance and imperial power are broadly discussed within the literature on the topic. Debates on polarity of the system, hegemony and balance of power reflect the main role of the state as defining the international order. As Alida Tomja (2014) observes in her research, the body of IR literature available is mixed and scholars from different schools of IR do not agree on how the dynamics, structures and features of hegemony affect the stability of the international system.

Thomas S. Mowle and David H. Sacko (2007) in their book *The Unipolar World: An Unbalanced Future* try to turn to main IR theories to explain the emergence of the US hegemony or unipolar world system. As they criticize, when power is the subject, realism or liberalism schools of thought should present answers. However, in their view, the liberalism school of thought is not able to explain the unipolar world lead by the US. As they note, the theory does not even speak about the unipolar world. Realism, on the contrary, speaks about power, however according to theory; the world should have balance between multiple major powers.

The authors generally present three main discussions within the scholarship of IR following the post-cold war era. Firstly, the negligence of the unipolar world system and presence of the US hegemony and further disagreements on the very concept are discussed. Secondly, those who acknowledge the US hegemony were concentrated on questioning the time it takes for the hegemony to fall and their interpretations would vary as well. Lastly, the scholars` focus was on questioning the outcome of one actor`s dominance in global politics. (Mowle & Sacko, 2007) From the topics of discussion, it can be observed that there is no conventional agreement on what constitutes hegemony, what are the conditions for a hegemon to emerge and sustain, and the effects that hegemony has on the international system.

Hegemony, as a concept throughout literature, is highly criticized. As Susan Strange notes, theories of hegemony lack a single body of consistent ideas: *“They are a bundle of concepts and explanations centering on the notion of the role of the hegemon or leader, the dominant state in the international*

*system, and the connection between the hegemon and the stability of that system.” (Mowle & Sacko, 2007, p. 7)*

According to Mowle and Sacko, hegemony as a concept is so debated that the only certain element of hegemony is power, whereas other constitutes of hegemony or factors, which are important to hegemony, are varying through different authors and schools of thought. (Mowle & Sacko, 2007)

Anthony T. Gadzey distinguishes between different approaches of hegemony, these being, structural hegemony, behavioral hegemony, issue- specific hegemony, multi- issue and legitimate hegemony, the Gramscian approach. In this review, the single-issue hegemony and multi-issue hegemony will be further discussed.

The single-issue hegemony derives from a structural view of hegemony and can be used to explain the contention of the continuity of American hegemony. Hegemony is often defined structurally in terms of relative shares of economic, political and military capabilities. This conceptualization makes visible the continuity of American hegemony as long as the US has a greater share of things such as specific military forces and trade, even if it is surpassed in other areas such as the control of international finance and the possibility of producing quality products cheaply. (Gadzey, 1994)

Regarding the multi-issue approach Gadzey considers that hegemony is about functional power among sovereign states’ conflicting foreign objectives that are in need of scarce management because they are not in perfect harmony. In order to be effective, or perceived as such in this hostile atmosphere, hegemony is required simultaneously in all the vital issue areas such as economic, political, military, diplomatic, and even cultural sectors. On these conceptions, the basis of the multi-issue approach is formed. This means that hegemony represents the ability of the hegemonic state to control the rest of the states according to its will, focusing especially on its rivals. (Gadzey, 1994)

Andreas Antoniadis in his paper claims that traditional theories of IR rather detain the concept instead of explaining it. The problem of studying hegemony from theories of IR, as he claims, is that such a study lays more focus on theories and their underlying assumptions than on the concept itself. Further Antoniadis suggests moving away from using IR theories to study hegemony and

presents his own approach of understanding and studying hegemony. (Antoniades, 2008) Such attempts to offer new approaches towards the conception of hegemony are not new, as the author notes. However, it clearly presents the underlying problem of the study of hegemony discussed earlier in the introduction.

Finally, Owen Worth in his book *Rethinking Hegemony* discusses the concept of hegemony in different aspects where it is used. As Worth argues, the concept of hegemony is used in abundance. In international relations, there is a global, regional, ideological hegemony. In different cases, as Worth notes, hegemony can provide different meanings and understandings. Further, he notes, numerous definitions of the concept leave the impression that the term is different in each case, depending on underlying ontological assumptions and meanings. Thus, in his book, Worth reviews the concept of hegemony and offers to review it in a more critical way. (Worth, 2015)

The scholars and works reviewed in this chapter are only a few of many. Whilst reading upon various works on hegemony, it can be observed that the fragmented study of the concept is a known issue for many. However, instead of reaching agreements, scholars attempt to construct new approaches or frameworks for studying hegemony, constituted from different theories available.

Here, however, one must understand that social sciences are not natural sciences and thus there is no 'one truth'. World around us is constituted through different meanings and constructions of our own, thus what might seem true and real to us might not seem the same for others. Applied in science, epistemological and ontological assumptions, that one has when carrying a research has a direct impact on its results. And therefore, studies of hegemony differ from one another. This aspect of philosophical considerations in social sciences will be discussed through the length of this paper, as it is the main reason of why the study of hegemony is fragmented.

The literature reviewed places this study in a broader context of field of IR. It is puzzling to see scholars acknowledging the fragmented study field of hegemony in IR, though no attempt is made to understand the differences, as noticed through research. A couple of differences are mentioned in various analyses between different approached to studying hegemony, although an in depth

analysis was not found. Further, it is a popular practice to underline certain differences and aspects of studying hegemony, with an attempt to combine those into some new theory or framework.

This paper, in contrast, is not of revolutionary or critical nature. It will not attempt to construct a new approach of studying hegemony. Nor will it aim to criticize theories of their contrasting features, inconsistencies or failure to apply in historical events.

This study is of comparative nature, seeking to reach and present a better understanding of study of hegemony in three contrasting theories of realism, liberalism and Gramscianism.

Such a study is beneficial for IR scholarship, suggesting a shift from criticizing the existing theories for the differences and fragmentation, towards a deeper and complex understanding.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This section will provide methodological assumptions and considerations relevant for this paper. An overview of the structure of this paper is presented in figure 2 below, which was specifically created for the purpose of presenting how the paper was written and which steps were taken.

The structure is useful in many ways. For us, the authors of this paper, to better visualize the flow and scope of this paper. Additionally, having the research paper designed helps to ensure the quality of the paper. As for readers, the figure presented serves as a guideline showing the outline and contents of the paper.

#### Background

- Introduction and literature review
- Topic and motivation, relevance of study
- Problem formulation and research questions

#### Methodology

- Philosophy of science
- Methods
- Limitations

#### Scientific background

- Concept of hegemony
- Theories of IR: realism, liberalism and Gramscianism
- Other approaches to hegemony

#### Analysis

- Historical background
- Application of historical events to illustrate IR theories
- Comparison

#### Conclusions

Figure 2 Design of the paper

In the following chapters, philosophy of science and methods used within this paper will be presented in more detail.

### 3.1 PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Philosophy in social sciences is a crucial tool to have. It is the philosophical foundation on which the entire study is built upon. Ontology explains one’s view towards the understanding of reality, whereas epistemology sets conditions upon which one’s knowledge is gained. In essence, ontology is concerned with construction of reality and epistemology with questions like what is knowledge, how is it acquired and how can one know what one knows. (Kuada, 2011) In this paper, where the focus is laid on differing theories of IR, which themselves already maintain certain philosophical paradigms, it is necessary to establish fundamental views towards reality and truth used in this paper.

Constructivism is the underlying paradigm of this paper. Often referred to as interpretivism, constructivism is focused on social forces that shape one’s understanding of knowledge and truth. Objective statements about reality in this tradition are denied – meanings are socially constructed and therefore cannot be detached from one’s views, experiences and values. Single reality, then, does not exist – rather there are multiple realities constructed by each individual. (Hurd, 2008) It is especially evident throughout this paper and the topic chosen. A single concept of hegemony in IR became highly debatable phenomena between scholars, who cannot seem to agree on basic components that constitute the concept, not to mention further discussions on causes, explanations and other variables of hegemony. However, it is maintained throughout this paper that each theory must be reviewed in more depth so a better understanding can be obtained. Once underlying assumptions of each theory are laid down, one can understand the meaning of a theory. Ontological and epistemological explanations will illustrate this further.

The ontology maintained in this paper is relativism. It holds that one does not have a direct access to the truth ‘out there’ - one can only access representations of the world created upon one’s consciousness. How a concept of hegemony is being interpreted in so many different ways and no conventional agreement as to how to treat the concept is established? How do scholars look at same historical events, for instance, and explain the events differently? Relativism ontology is able to explain such phenomena based on social forces that construct ones’ views and understanding. (Scotland, 2012) Hegemony, viewed through different lenses of IR theories is viewed from different

angles and different explanations are assigned based on the school of thought. IR theories themselves emerged and maintained in certain periods of time and were influenced by authors' experiences and values. Realism, for example, gained much popularity during times of war and conflict, influenced by pessimistic views held by society. Liberalism, as another case, emerged as a critique to realism inspired by certain historical events which constructed yet another reality. To illustrate this simply, realist scholars have their reality constructed around the notion of power and anarchy, while liberals' reality is based on cooperation and rejection of power politics. So, a basic event such as certain policy change of a state from the two schools will be viewed from different angles, with different explanations due to underlying assumptions of each theory which shapes one's view towards reality. Therefore, a single reality does not exist. It is always subject to one's background. And therefore, hegemony does not have a single definition, single understanding. It is subject to underlying assumptions that are held by the one evaluating the concept.

The epistemology used in this paper is subjectivism, following the relativism ontology. Subjectivism maintains that knowledge cannot exist without individuals who construct it. Thus, knowledge is subjective and the world constructed by each individual is relevant to their background, experiences and other social forces influencing them. Further, there is no ultimate truth as multiple interpretations are available for any given situation. (Scotland, 2012) And therefore, knowledge and conceptualizations available on hegemony are all different interpretations subject to authors' construct of reality. It cannot be maintained in this philosophy that a certain conceptualization of hegemony is 'wrong' or 'faulty'. It is rather different interpretations of the concept. Inclusion or exclusion of certain features and parameters of the concept depends on one's understanding and experience of what variables matter and influence the world and reality around and what not.

The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the concept of hegemony and compare the different conceptions and approaches to it. However, since the concept itself in different theories has certain implications due to the paradigm held, it is impossible to have a single view towards reality and knowledge. Throughout this paper, it will be evident that the theories put in analysis all have different views constructed. And therefore, philosophical departure of constructive paradigm is followed in this paper.

### 3.2 METHOD

Having philosophical foundations laid in the previous chapter, it is now relevant to discuss the method used to obtain the knowledge. As the topic indicates, the paper is designed around the comparative method. Comparison is a crucial tool of analysis allowing one to obtain a deeper knowledge as opposed to a single case study.

David Collier, in his article *The Comparative Method*, suggests that in political science and IR, the comparative method of studies is used rather widely by scholars. Further, he argues, that a small amount of cases taken into comparison presents greater legitimacy in recent years. Too many cases selected lead to greater number of variables to be taken into consideration. As the number of variables increases, it is hardly feasible for a researcher to evaluate and be able to judge so many comparative findings. (Collier, 1993)

In his article, Collier presents Lijphart’s synopsis, which suggests that ‘comparable’ cases can be of two types: (1) cases where variables match, but they are not central to the analysis; and (2) cases where variables of the cases differ, though the variables are central to the study. Thus, this implies that cases for a comparative study must be carefully matched. However, there are opposing opinions, arguing that the careful matching often results in failure to eliminate rival explanations. Therefore, they suggest using cases that are highly diverse among which similarities can be traced. (Collier, 1993)

In this paper, the focus is laid on the concept of hegemony. Further, three main cases were chosen – i.e. three grand theories of IR. These cases were chosen based on their differences instead of commonalities. As in depth theoretical review will be presented further in this paper, variables of hegemony vary. Realism is focused on coercion, neo-liberalism on consent, whereas Gramscian scholarship is even more complex to include both coercion and consent. In terms of Lijphart’s synopsis, the chosen cases are comparable even with different variables, as the variables themselves are central to this study – it is the ultimate aim of this paper: to discover commonalities and variables of hegemony conceptualization when it is studied in different theories of IR.

Furthermore, as Collier notes, new perspectives on comparative methods must be considered. One of these is the goal of comparison. As conventional understanding holds, comparative studies are

focused on assessing inconsistent explanations. However, it is argued that comparative studies should be understood in three distinct, yet connected goals. These three goals are: causal analysis, parallel demonstration of theory and contrast of contexts. (Collier, 1993) This paper has the three goals combined:

- *Causal analysis* - to assess rival explanations of the different theories as to how a hegemon is conceptualized and how hegemony can be understood and explained;
- *Parallel demonstration of theory* – to apply the historical case of the US hegemony and assess whether the theories' explanations and understanding applies in explaining historical events;
- *Contrast of contexts* – to highlight the differences between the different theories and explanations in order to present how the same concept of hegemony varies depending on which school of thought is chosen.

### **3.3 DATA**

The data used throughout this paper is of qualitative nature. The choice of qualitative data derives from the focus and philosophical standpoint of this paper. As the goal of this paper is to compare different approaches of studying hegemony, it implies gathering information and presenting the approaches before one can make a comparison. Information on the topic is of qualitative nature and therefore qualitative data is used. Further, as differences between the conceptualizations are apparent, one must use interpretations to understand the reasons and implications of the divergence.

Qualitative data, in contrast to quantitative, presents more in depth understanding of a problem. Even though some quantitative data was used in this paper as well, to illustrate certain cases, it is used as supporting evidence. Because the concept of hegemony itself is of subjective nature built upon social constructions, only qualitative data can provide explanations and understanding of the concept in different approaches. The data used in this paper was collected from secondary sources

obtained through desk research from various sources. The sources are mainly books, textbooks and articles of academic nature.

Even though some consider that validity and reliability in qualitative studies are not applicable, certain measures were taken to ensure the quality of this paper. These include: establishment of epistemological and ontological views, creation of a figure presenting research design, the triangulation method when using different sources for the same phenomena, and implementation of analytical strategy for conducting the research.

### **3.4 LIMITATIONS**

This study is limited to a comparative study of conception of hegemony and thus does not imply that findings of this paper can be generalized and applied to other concepts comparison within the theories analyzed. Although it would have been interesting and beneficial to study other concepts as well, time constraints on this paper did not allow such an analysis. Such a study would contribute to academic knowledge and might allow for a certain degree of generalization.

Further, this paper is limited to the three main chosen theories of IR. Although some approaches outside the theories are present, such as the hegemonic stability theory, it is for the purpose of illustrating and outlining certain differences. It is apparent that there are many other conceptualizations and approaches of the concept of hegemony available, especially in contemporary literature. Nevertheless, following the comparative method logic of this paper, only a number of cases were chosen.

It is important to note that the grand schools of thought of IR chosen in this paper (realism, liberalism and Gramscianism) are not the primary grand theories themselves, but rather revised theories borrowing from the primary ones. In fact, the analysis is based on theories of neo-realism, neo-liberalism and neo-Gramscianism which derive from the grand theories. Reasons of this choice are outlined in the theory chapter.

Lastly, this study did not in depth considered the differences between hegemony and unipolarity. In the realism school of thought, ‘poles’ are used to describe the power concentration in one actor’s hands. However, throughout desk research it was noted that hegemony and poles are being used

interchangeably within works of scholars. This treatment of concept of poles was followed in this paper as well. However, towards the finalization of this paper, it became doubtful if the interpretation that hegemony and pole can be considered the same. Therefore, the study is limited to this assumption of concepts being interchangeable, however further research on it would be recommended.

## 4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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Already outlined throughout the length of this paper, theories of IR are of essential focus in this study. This chapter offers in depth discussions and presentations of the theories used to analyze the concept of hegemony. Because of constructive philosophical paradigm followed in this paper, it is of high necessity to outline the basic assumptions and constructions of the theories used in the analysis.

Firstly, the concept of hegemony will be discussed. For some, hegemony simplistically refers to domination. However, it is a much more complex concept, lacking conventional definition and therefore being interpreted in many ways, depending on the ontology and epistemology held. Later, theories of realism, liberalism and Gramscianism will be presented with an aim of answering the following questions: what does theory say about international politics and what basic assumptions does it hold? How is the international system seen under theory? And how is hegemony understood under the theory? Further, different approaches of studying hegemony will be reviewed.

### 4.1 HEGEMONY

The term of hegemony was brought into IR literature by Robert Keohane - deriving from the Greek word *hegemonia*, which translates to dominance or leadership. Conventionally understood in politics, the term usually refers to actor`s national role and certain international system (Mowle & Sacko, 2007).

Usually described as domination or leadership, it is a highly debatable concept throughout the literature of IR, especially when the two descriptions differ in their very essence. Put simply, hegemon is understood as an actor holding the most power. However, there are two types of power to distinguish between: direct and indirect (hard and soft). The first could be understood in terms of coercive force use and domination. The latter is focused on hegemon`s influence and leadership - soft power.

Hegemony in terms of domination by scholars is understood as “predominance of one state over its peers” (Stiles, 2009, pp. 2-3), “dominance of one state over the others” (Cox R. W., 1993, p. 264) or “preponderance of military and economic capabilities (Ikenberry & Kupchan, 1990, p. 49). Dominance’s focus is then laid on actors’ aggregate resources within the international system that offer wide range of capabilities and it is all subject to the degree of concentration of those resources within the international system. This understanding is not limited to the actor’s capabilities, but through its’ interests as well: hegemonic power is then conceptualized as a powerful enough actor to establish international rule, ensure they are followed, and has a will to do so (Keohane, 1989). Then hegemony is conditional on two factors: actor’s ability to hold sufficient power and willingness to exercise it.

Hegemony understood as leadership is a bit harder to grasp. Bruce Russett (1985) observes that for a successful hegemonic rule to last, the direct power of a hegemon is not playing a crucial role. Typically ignored, as Russett argues, cultural hegemony plays a crucial role in the successful exercise of hegemonic power. This cultural leadership, or soft power, represents an intangible aspect of control through the hegemon's ability to establish preferences and transfer an ideology that is accepted by other states. Brilmayer presents a view where hegemony creates a need for ‘political morality’ – if the essential expectation of actors is that they should all be treated equally is violated, then political morality emerges where hegemony (or leadership) can be established only if political morality exists (Brilmayer, 1994). Here the focus of hegemony shifts from the hegemon itself towards other actors of IR. Leadership in this perspective is not focused on the hegemon itself, but rather on international society’s view towards the hegemon. This view then holds that capabilities and willingness of an actor are not sufficient to emerge as a hegemon. It is worth noting how here the focus shifts from a hegemon and its’ interests towards the interests of the rest. At this point, different schools of IR claim different interests of actors.

Both types of power (direct and indirect), present aspects of the hegemon’s ability to influence actors to achieve desirable outcomes for the hegemon. The difference lies in the nature of its behavior and tangibility of the resources. While direct power refers to the hegemon's use of tangible assets such as military to place coercive power, or using economic resources to obtain military weapons and etc., indirect power, in contrast, cannot be measured as it represents

intangible assets such as the ability to attract actors by using the hegemon’s presented ideas and even influence to transform the ideas into everyone's preference.

There are three commonalities in conceptualizing the concept noticed throughout different definitions. These commonalities will be used as the main features of hegemony throughout this paper when not referring to a certain theory of IR. Firstly, a hegemon must have substantial relative power when compared with other actors. Secondly, a hegemon must be able to induce rules or foreign policy within international politics and be willing to do so. Put in other words, it must be able and inclined to take the international leadership role. Lastly, the leadership must be accepted by other major powers.

## **4.2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The contemporary field of IR offers multiple perspectives on how to look at today’s world and hegemony is of great importance in IR, however, it is lacking a complete body of theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence as claimed by some scholars. Therefore, different schools of IR are looking at hegemony, or ‘pole’ in realism, from different angles, levels and approaches. This chapter will review the existing theory on hegemony from various perspectives in a critical and comparative manner to build the theoretical foundations for this paper.

### **4.2.1 Realism**

Realism is one of dominant schools of thought in IR, however, as scholars like Robert Giplin, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, and Stephen Van Evera note, realism is rather a philosophical position or paradigm, not a single theory. In scientific research, realism comprises many competing theories within, such as classical and neo-realism (structural realism), offensive and defensive realism, neo-classical realism and such. Different theories are focused on different aspects of power. (Wang, 2004)

There are few main assumptions that realism holds and many of the competing theories share. Firstly, states are the main actors of global politics. Second, realists hold that states’ behavior is influenced by the external environment and internal characteristics of actors, such as culture or ideologies do not make any difference. The external environment is the anarchic system of the

world. Third, states seek for survival, thus the struggle for power is inevitable, and a zero-sum game is central to realists. States will go into conflicts or even wars to maximize their power in the expense of others. Lastly, states are assumed to be rational actors. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001) (Wang, 2004)

For realists, power is “*the currency of international politics*” (Mearsheimer J. J., 2010, p. 78) and therefore states` strategies and actions are always concerned with power within the international stage. Whether seeking to increase their relative power on the international stage or to ensure that no other stronger actor appears and challenges world order, states are looking at each other`s economic and military power in a relative manner and compete for power (Mearsheimer J. J., 2010).

In this paper, three realism thought theories will be discussed: the classical realism of Hans Morgenthau, and two neo-realist theories: defensive realism of Kenneth Waltz and offensive realism of John Mearsheimer.

The main difference between various theories of realism is the defining reason of why states go to war. For classical realists, it is the human nature that always seeks for dominance and power over its rivals. For neo-realists, in contrast, conflicts occur due to the anarchic structure of international politics that forces actors to pursue power. Furthermore, realists view power as the ultimate goal of states themselves, whereas structural realists maintain that the ultimate goal of actors is survival and seeking for power is a mean to achieve the ultimate goal. Detailed discussions on the chosen theories are presented next.

#### **4.2.1.1 Classical realism**

Generally, realism is focused on states as the main actors in global politics, building upon the concept of power. Classical realists like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Bismarck contributed much to the philosophy of realism (Brown & Ainley, 2005). Realism became one of the dominant analytical paradigms in IR during The World War II, offering an explanation to when, how and why conflict occurs (Toledo, 2005).

The explanation in classical realism (also called “human nature realism”) is based on the anarchic and chaotic nature of men, where mistrust, insecurity and fear lead to competition for wealth,

resources and recognition (Toledo, 2005). In other words, realists view the world from a pessimistic angle, where the emphasis is laid on the actors' conflictual nature and struggle for dominance or power. The mistrust and constant struggle for power for the sake of survival by actors is central in realism. To ensure their own survival, states must ensure that their military capabilities are sufficient. However, actors' increase in military power increases the fear of their rivals. Usually then, the rivals would also attempt to increase their relative power. And, following this logic, states constantly compete. This is also referred to as the security dilemma in IR when actors are increasing their military capabilities to ensure their own security. However, if one actor is to increase its military power substantially, others are likely to follow. Measures taken to increase state's security will usually result in a decrease of other states security. Threatened by it, the states will subsequently attempt to secure themselves with certain measures. This competition for power then usually results in tensions and even conflict between the actors.

This competition and state of conflict is explained by the balance of power theory of realists. The classical realist approach views balance of power as a way to ensure peaceful structural conditions. In essence, the theory maintains that if one of the actors on the international stage were to increase its power and cause major power shifts within the international system, threatened states would then form a counter-balancing coalition in response. This in turn, would then lead to conflict until the order would be more or less balanced and therefore stability within relations of states would be maintained.

According to Hans Morgenthau (1960), dominating realist thinker, the balance of power theory can be viewed from two angles: as a policy and as a situation. As a situation, the balance of power could be in equilibrium or disequilibrium – i.e. power within the international system is either balanced along the most powerful states, or unbalanced, when one state holds more power than others and is thus able to challenge the international system or even abuse its power. Historically, equilibrium and balance of power was evident during the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union; disequilibrium emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the US became evidently the dominant state of world affairs. (Morgenthau, 1960) As a policy, balance of power entails that actors will often seek to preserve the equilibrium – either by strengthening their own power or

allying with other actors to hold more power jointly in order to keep peace and stability. (Toledo, 2005)

However, after reading more upon the balance of power theory, one can notice that there is no conventional definition of the concept (Danilovic, 2002) (Baldwin, 2012). In fact, it is used so broadly that some scholars are criticizing the notion for being ambiguous and confusing. To illustrate the confusion, A. Tziampiris collected different meanings of the balance of power theory as presented:

- An even distribution of power within the global stage;
- The principle that power should be distributed evenly;
- Any distribution of power that is being discussed;
- The principle of increasing power and influence of world powers in expense of the weak;
- Predominance;
- A tendency of international politics to produce an even distribution of power. (Tziampiris, 2014)

Furthermore, Tziampiris suggests not focusing on the different meanings of balance of power, but on commonalities instead. These commonalities focus on the actors' concern with power and its distribution within the international system, which is of an anarchic nature (Tziampiris, 2014). This, then, points to the main assumptions of realists' school of thought. Subsequently, the realist balance of power theory, then, is defined as actors' actions towards maintaining the international system in certain balance for the sake of their own survival.

Hegemony, understood from established definition for this paper, then, in realists' theory, is temporary as eventually other actors will attempt to ally against the hegemon and weaken its power. This claim is based on the basic assumptions of realism. Firstly, that the nature of the world is chaotic and anarchic, which in turn means that there is no authority or global governance which would be able to control IR and constrain the actions of other actors. Secondly, states are assumed to be the most important actors on the international stage – they are the ultimate decision makers and driving forces of IR, despite non-state actors or non-governmental organization's ability to influence world events, they are not assumed to have power to influence IR itself. Lastly, the belief that states' ultimate goal is based on their self-interest, which is usually security and survival.

Subsequently, the three assumptions combined present a world view where states, aiming to survive, will ally and balance against a hegemon for their own security. Insecurities about actors' safety and chance of survival, along with same concerns from other actors, create tensions among actors and even conflicts due to the security dilemma. (Rambachan, 2013)

If hegemony is defined simply as one state's dominance over the others, then the unipolar world order in realism can be understood as hegemony. In the realist school of thought, then, a hegemon emerges through struggle for its own survival, power and wealth. And this emergence and hegemony is explained through power relations. However, combining the balance of power theory into the emergence of a hegemon, no hegemon is able to keep its predominance, because sooner or later, according to the theory, counter balancing would occur. In other words, it is predicted that as soon as a hegemon would emerge, other actors would aim to weaken the hegemon and balance against it (Rambachan, 2013).

#### **4.2.1.2 Structural realism**

Criticism on the realist school of thought has resulted in the emergence of neo-realism, or structural realism, as an alternative to the classical theory. Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer are one of the most associated theorists with neo-realism and have contributed greatly to the literature on the topic.

The fundamental departure point distinguishing neo-realism from classical realism is an assumption that international politics have an accurately defined structure (Waltz K. N., 2003). Structure is further defined by the distribution of capabilities of actors' in the international system. As Waltz explains, the anarchic nature of states is not a sufficient explanation of why war and peace occur, although anarchy is an essential structural quality of the system (Waltz K. N., 1988). Anarchy is the international system's ordering principle which means that there is no authority higher than states. Anarchy does not imply chaotic order or disorder, but rather the absence of a world government. Domestic politics, in comparison, is structured as a hierarchy, whereas international politics are assumed to be of an anarchic structure with actors competing for survival. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001) (Waltz K. N., 1988)

In general, neorealists do not focus on the behavior of states alone (and human nature), but rather on a causal link between states' behavior and outcomes within the international system (Waltz K. N., 2003). As the international structure is anarchic in neorealists' point of view, states, as the main actors of international politics, are constantly threatened by each other and subsequently act in certain ways to survive. As Waltz describes – where there is no single authority commanding on the international stage, there is no guarantees that states will not intervene and act in their best interests (Waltz K. N., 1979). Mearsheimer illustrates the situation very well: *“In essence, great powers are trapped in an iron cage where they have little choice but to compete with each other for power if they hope to survive.”* (Mearsheimer J. J., 2006, p. 72). Furthermore, structural realists ignore the difference between states' regime type and culture. For them, states are assumed to be alike because no matter the differences, the anarchic structure of IR creates the same incentives for all powers (Mearsheimer J. J., Structural Realism, 2006). Therefore, structure is the main determinant of events of IR as it may encourage actors to take certain actions and discourage to take others. Then, actors' ability to seek and achieve their objectives is subject to the power of rivals.

Generally, the neo-realist approach is focused on coercive power within the international stage. When the distribution of power within the IR is sufficiently asymmetrical, a hegemon emerges. In order for this to happen, a state must have military power to directly control its rivalries and economic wealth to sustain its military power.

Neo-realists can be further divided into defensive and offensive realists. The main difference between the two is a view held towards the pursuit of power. Defensive realists like K. Waltz assert that states should never try to maximize their power in IR as it is unwise because eventually, if too much power is gained, conflict within the system will occur and the state will be punished. Therefore, in defensive neorealists' view, pursuit of hegemony is reckless. Offensive realists, in contrast, state that the pursuit of hegemony is a good strategic goal of actors because it would allow the assurance of ones' survival within global politics. (Mearsheimer J. J., Structural Realism, 2006)

### ***Defensive realism***

Kenneth Waltz, in *The Theory of International Politics*, uses the concept of ‘pole’ to describe the dominance of a state. For him, for an actor to qualify as a pole, it must feature the following power components: size of population, territory, natural resources, economic capacity along with military power and organizational-institutional competence (Waltz K. N., 1979). The Unipolar system, in Waltz’s view, is then a system which is structured in a way that only a single actor meets the aforementioned criteria.

Leadership in defensive neorealists’ view is then relative to the capabilities of actors. And those capabilities are determining the emergence and survival of a hegemon. As Waltz argues, leadership is defined by capability and by the absence of alternative to it - if the strongest powers would not deploy their capabilities, no leadership or authority would exist and the system would lack any authority at all. (Waltz K. N., 1979)

Defensive realists maintain that anarchy in IR leads actors to act defensively towards shifts of power on the international stage. As Waltz argues, states’ aim is to maintain their position (or status quo) in the system rather than challenge it. Even though states have incentives of gaining power at other actors’ expense; the argument is that when offensive aggression is exercised by the state, the rivals would usually balance against the aggressor. Therefore, states’ pursuit of power should be very carefully evaluated – if too much power is gained, the counter balancing is predicted to occur and ultimately ‘punish’ the hegemon.

### ***Offensive realism***

Offensive realism maintains the opposite of defensive realism and, as Mearsheimer argues, the structure of the international system provides incentives for states to attempt to gain more power at the weaker actors’ expense, given that benefits in such situations outweigh costs. Then, state’s main goal is to become the only major power within the system – a hegemon. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

Mearsheimer presents five assumptions of defensive realism that, joint together, explain why states pursue power and behave offensively. The anarchic structure of the international system, states’ possession of military capability, actor’s uncertainty towards rivals’ intentions, the main goal

of the actors being survival and rationality of the actors. When these assumptions are joint, incentives for a state to act offensively towards the others increase. Mearsheimer sees three general patterns of behavior – fear, self-help and power maximization. As offensive realism maintains, actors of the international system mistrust one another – aiming to ensure their own survival, they seek to increase their relative power which in turn creates fear of other actors. In awareness of the self-help system, where states are selfish and act in their own interests, there is only one way to ensure safety for an actor – to become a hegemon - the most powerful state in the system. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

Even though hegemony is the ultimate goal of states in offensive realism, actors cannot always act on their offensive intentions due to limits of their capacities. If a great power has a power advantage over its rivals, usually it will act more aggressively. Alternatively, actors facing more powerful rivalries might consider defending the existing balance instead of taking offensive actions. Mearsheimer maintains that if there is an opportunity for an actor to pursue more power, the advantage of it will be taken on the expense of others. It is always rationality that determines actors` behavior – weighting costs versus benefits. As Mearsheimer notes, it is likely that states will cooperate with one another in certain circumstances, but eventually the conflict of interests would lead to competition. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

Hegemony in defensive realism is defined as a situation when the only great power exists within the system dominating it. Mearsheimer distinguishes between regional and global hegemony, further arguing that global hegemony is virtually impossible. Only in the event of nuclear superiority an actor would become a global hegemon but that, in Mearsheimer`s writings, is not likely to happen soon and he suggests focusing on regional hegemonies instead. It is the ideal situation for an actor to be the only regional hegemon in the world. If there are other regional hegemons within the system, it is likely that the hegemons would go to considerable lengths to weaken or even destroy each other. This in turn would lead to a vicious security competition between the regional hegemons. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

#### 4.2.1.3 *Realism theories compared*

Although the realism theories agree on the importance of security and power within the system, the main difference is the nature of incentives for pursuit of power. Classical realism maintains that it is the human nature and desire for power rooted within that pushes states to compete for power. Structural realists, however, reject this idea and focus on the anarchic structure of international system. The structure forces actors to seek for more power and subsequently maximize their security. As Mearsheimer notes, “*Great powers behave aggressively not because they want to or because they possess some inner drive to dominate, but because they have to seek more power if they want to maximize their odds of survival.*” (Mearsheimer J. , 2001, p. 13). Classical realism along with offensive realism hold that states` ultimate goal is hegemony and thus maximizing their relative power has no boundaries. Defensive realism, on the other hand, holds that states should not seek for much more power than they have – maintaining the balance of power is the goal.

While Morgenthau is focused of balance of power, Waltz uses ‘poles’ to describe world order. These concepts within the paper are used interchangeably with hegemony. However, as outlined in the methodology chapter of this paper, it is a limitation because these concepts should be reviewed in more depth. In this paper, it is the author`s assumption that poles have the same meaning as hegemony. Nevertheless, offensive realism has its focus on hegemony and offers in depth understanding of the concept.

In realism, the focus is laid on power relations and power shifts within the international system. The core problem of unbalanced power on a global stage is the threat that a hegemon will have capabilities to create and enforce rules on the less powerful (Hurrell, 2006). This in turn creates fear between the weaker actors of the IR on how can a hegemon be accountable to the weaker states. If there are no external restraints put on a hegemon, it is even more threatening as the international order would depend on the hegemon`s degree of self-restraint (Lebow R. N., 2003).

Henry Kissinger, a famous realist, holds that stability within IR can be achieved through dispersal of power and consensus between the great powers which ultimately results in a legitimate order. However, if legitimacy is created through consensus between actors who are otherwise

competitive, then the legitimacy is limited to the event if concentration of power emerges. (Kissinger, 1997)

#### 4.2.2 Neo-liberalism

In the field of IR, neo-liberalism is a school of thought which believes that states are concerned with absolute gains and not relative gains in rapport to other states. Neo-liberalism differs from neo-liberal economic ideology, even though both theories use common methodologies, including game theory.

Neo-liberal IR thinkers use game theory to explain why states cooperate or not (Keohane R. , *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, 1984). They tend to emphasize the possibility of mutual wins and are interested in institutions which, according to them, can arrange mutually profitable arrangements and compromises.

Neo-liberalism is considered to be a response to neo-realism. Even though it does not deny the anarchic nature of the international system, neo-liberals stress that its importance and effect has been overestimated. This argument is based on neorealists' underestimation of the multitude of cooperative behavior possible inside a decentralized system (Evans, 1998). Both theories consider the state and its interests as the main subject of analysis, however neo-liberalism has a wider conception of what those interests are.

Neo-liberalism considers that even in an anarchic system of autonomous rational states, cooperation is possible through mutual trust and the creation of norms, regimes and institutions. The debate between neo-liberalism and neo-realism is an intra-paradigm one due to the fact that both theories are positivist and focus mainly on the state system as the primary unit of analysis.

The founders of the neo-liberal school of thought are Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. Keohane's book *After Hegemony* is considered a classic of this genre. Other major influences here are the hegemonic stability theory of Charles P. Kindleberger, among others.

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye develop an opposing theory to neo-realism, named 'complex interdependence'. It refers to the fact that complex interdependence sometimes comes closer to reality than realism. In explaining this, Keohane and Nye cover the three assumptions in realist

thought: that states are coherent units and the dominant actors in IR; that force is a usable and efficient policy tool; and finally, the assumption that there is a hierarchy in international politics. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

The core idea of Keohane and Nye's argument is that in international politics there are multiple channels that connect societies surpassing the conventional Westphalian system of states. This can be considered as informal governmental ties to multinational corporations and organizations. They argue that *transgovernmental* relations occur when one relaxes the realist assumption that states act coherently as units; *transnational* is valid when one removes the assumption that states are the only units. Through these channels political exchange occurs and not through the interstate channel as stated by realists. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

Keohane and Nye state that, a hierarchy among issues does not exist, which means that foreign policy is not the supreme instrument by which state's agenda is carried out, but in fact there are many different agendas that come to the forefront. The line between domestic and foreign policy becomes indistinguishable in the present case, because there is no clear agenda in interstate relations. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

The final argument refers to the use of military force, which is not exercised when complex interdependence prevails. They consider that between countries where a complex interdependence is present, the role of the military in resolving disputes is negated. However, Keohane and Nye argue that the military is important in the alliance's political and military relations with a competing bloc. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

Robert Keohane explains hegemony as primarily a phenomenon of economic dominance. He defines hegemony as a preponderance of material resources. Here he continues and explains that four sets of resources are important in equal measure. Hegemonic powers have to control raw materials, sources of capital, markets and possess competitive advantages in producing highly valued goods. (Keohane R. , 1984)

Keohane's emphasis is based on the economic influence of the hegemon. Control over the four sets of resources mentioned above helps a state to punish its enemies and aid its allies. These controls

can be used both directly as instruments of coercive economic diplomacy and indirectly by reducing domestic costs. (Keohane R. , 1984)

Even though the emphasis is on economic factors, Keohane recognizes as well the importance of military capability of the hegemon. Here he states that a hegemonic state has to possess sufficient military power in order to protect the international political economy (IPE) that it dominates from interventions of hostile adversaries. (Keohane R. , 1984)

Creating institutions favor the hegemon, but in the meantime, provide protection and stability for the rest of the world. The more open the world order is, the less likely the rise of a challenger is. (Mirowski & Plehwe , 2009) Neo-liberals consider that when the decline of the hegemon occurs, institutions don't automatically die, because they were constructed in a way that is beneficial to all stakeholders.

#### **4.2.3 Gramscianism**

Gramscian scholarship of IR presents hegemony as a way of implemented ideas which in time become 'common sense' through persuasion - those ideas, that were once seen as ideas, become the way that things really are (Brown & Ainley, 2005). For instance, neo-liberal ideas spread by the US or the West hegemony are currently seen as common sense, especially in economics, where integration and cooperation are the necessary means for economic development.

In the Gramscian school of thought in IR, a state, as an actor of the international system, is seen as a ruling class of civil society – a 'historical block'. The state is further understood as involving the entire society and unifying all social classes and contradictions along them. Hegemony, according to Antonio Gramsci (1971), is the dominance of the ruling class in terms of control over interests, preferences and ways of conducting tasks of everyday life of other groups. The dominance is achieved through consent from these groups. If the ruling class loses its` consensus, the state is in crisis as the group is no longer leading, but only dominating.

In contrast to realism, to which hegemony is seen as one actor`s dominance over others in terms of coercive power, Gramscian hegemony is rather a combination of coercion and consent, exercised by the ruling class. According to Gramsci, a social class can become hegemonic not through

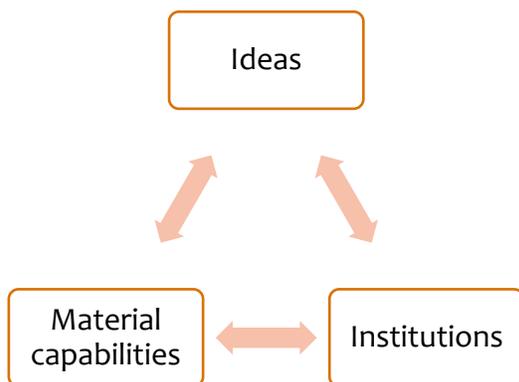
coercion, but by establishing consent among subordinate classes. Hegemony, as Gramscianism argues, is a strategic goal through which inter-class alliances are built and a unitary political bloc can be constructed under the political and ideological leadership of a social class. (Gramsci, 1971)

### Neo-Gramscianism

Robert Cox, building upon Gramsci’s concepts, has contributed to the neo-Gramscian school of thought applying Gramscian ideas on a larger scale, that of the global world. The theory is of critical nature, examining the reasons behind the emergence of new world orders and subsequently how institutions, norms, ideas or practices come into being, and what driving forces could have the potential to transform the prevailing order. Hegemony in this theory is then described as a combination of coercion and consent. It is more than just an imposition of some new world view, but a creation of common sense which spreads within a system including both dominant and subordinate social forces.

The main focus of Cox’s work is based on the effects that global capitalism has on material inequalities; however, he finds that hegemony of global scale starts from national hegemony established by a social class, further expanding outwards to the international scale. To illustrate, the US supremacy on the global stage is seen as an outward expansion of the American historical block and its legitimating ideology of neo-liberalism. In this sense hegemony is not simply a new established world order, but one in which a dominant mode of production, culture and institutions spreads to all countries. (Engel, 2008)

The structure of a system, according to Cox, is the result of interaction of three variables: ideas, institutions and material capabilities. These variables (or forces) do not flow in any particular



mechanical way, but rather impose pressures and constrains on societies. It is not a one way interaction, it is a reciprocal relationship as figure 3 illustrates.

Figure 3 Cox’s structure of three categories of forces (adopted from Cox, 1996, p. 98)

Thus, in neo-Gramscianism, power is a structure of these three variables. And the structure is constructed by the interactions between the variables. At the international level, Cox's three forces model is translated into spheres of the international system: social forces, forms of state and world orders (figure 4). The three levels are interrelated and thus change in one level would subsequently influence the structure itself. (Cox R. W., 1996)

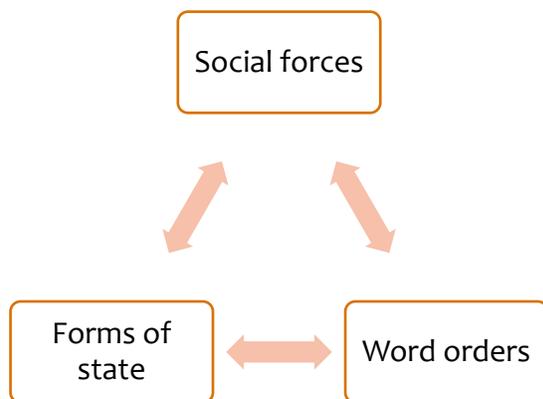


Figure 4 Cox's historical structure of spheres of activity (adopted from Cox, 1996, p. 101)

The main actor – a state, in neo-Gramscian scholarship, is then extended to include not only political society but also civil society. As

Gramsci illustrates, the supremacy of a social group is achieved in two ways: through domination and moral leadership. In this sense, for an actor to wield force effectively, a level of consent and persuasion is necessary. And similarly, to guarantee persuasion, an actor would need to have sufficient power of force. (Konrad, 2012) Consent itself could be achieved through persuasion and compromise, combining various interests of society. Then, if an actor has enough consent from the broad part of society, it could then use force on those who do not consent. (Engel, 2008)

Gramsci uses historical examples of Russia and the West during the 1920s and 1930s to illustrate the above explained balance between power and consent. In Russia, Gramsci notes, coercive organs and the government apparatus were unwelcomingly prevalent, whereas the civil society was fragmented and not autonomous. These conditions made it easy for Bolshevik revolutionaries to succeed and reconstruct the civil society. In the West, in contrast, political and civil societies were rather in consent and could not be separated from one another. Thus, the revolution fails due to the coercion and consent balance within the West societies – strong and persistent civil society could not be reconstructed. (Konrad, 2012)

In neo-Gramscian scholars' view, cultural leadership is as important as economic or military. They argue that nowadays the use of force without justification and support from other actors of IR

would not result in hegemonic emergence, rather the opposite. However, economic power that actors hold gained higher importance due to interdependence within the global stage. While military power is indeed a crucial aspect of hegemony, Gramscianism theorists maintain that it would be a mistake to focus on it alone. Conventional hegemony has to include economic and political coercion, but with established consent within its society. (Konrad, 2012)

Neo-Gramscianism then holds that only when consensus is achieved and material or economic conditions have been satisfied, the actor can emerge as a hegemon by presenting itself as an educator spreading its` intellect, morale and values. An actor with a strong culture and ideology is seen to be lasting much longer as a hegemon. (Konrad, 2012) Neo-Gramscian school holds the view that hegemony is more of a relationship based on consent built on political and ideological leadership, rather than domination built on power.

As Cox argues, the emergence of a hegemon can only be recognized when all of the three levels of structure coexist and a new historic bloc is then constructed through hegemonic ideas, which become dominant by allying social classes. Thus, for a hegemon to emerge, ideology and values of the dominant class must be accepted by subordinate classes and thus become universal. (Cox R. W., 1996)

Another important part of the neo-Gramscian hegemony is the role of institutions. International institutions are seen as insurers that hegemony of an actor will be maintained. It is claimed that hegemons create institutions to create legitimacy to their power in the eyes of other actors on a global stage. Additionally, the institutions could also be used as coercive tools when needed. (Konrad, 2012)

To sum up , neo-Gramscian school holds a view that hegemony is more of a relationship based on consent built on political and ideological leadership, rather than domination built on power.

#### **4.2.4 International Political Economy and Hegemonic Stability Theory**

A different aspect of studying hegemony is offered by international political economy (IPE). Under this field of study, scholars have tried to combine political and economic studies due to particular events in recent history. Scholars of IPE try to explain the implications between International

Politics and International Economics. An example here is the hegemonic stability theory (HST) by Charles Kindleberger and A. Gadzey's book *The Political Economy of Power*. The main argument is that the presence of a hegemon is needed in order to have economic cooperation in the international system and that in the absence of the order assured by a hegemon, the anarchic nature of the international system will make impossible economic cooperation even when consistent gains from trade are possible. While Gadzey focuses in his book on the unusual distribution of power, hegemony and its probable effects.

The political actions of nation-states visibly affect international trade and monetary flows, which then affects the environment where nation-states make political choices and entrepreneurs make economic choices. During the Cold War era two scholars attempted to unite the fields of International Politics and International Economy, economist Charles P. Kindleberger with his work on hegemony and political scientist Kenneth N. Waltz with the attempt to integrate economics into politics in his book *Man, the State, and War*. (Veseth, 2017)

The events of the 1970s revealed how the two fields were intertwined. The oil embargoes of the 1970s and the breakdown of the Bretton Woods monetary system are most commonly cited as key events in IPE's development as a field of study. These events posed practical and theoretical problems that necessarily forced scholars and policy-makers to consider economics and politics together: the rise of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Arab oil embargo of 1973-74. (Veseth, 2017)

IPE's most important contribution to Cold War international relations theory was the HST. It was developed by Charles P. Kindleberger in the early post-war era, and focuses on the motives and behavior of a hegemonic state. The hegemon is a wealthy and powerful state that undertakes to supply public goods to the international system. These include stable money, security (such as freedom of the seas), and a system of free trade that can be shared by all and that, in fact, works best when widely shared. The provision of public goods is costly; however, the hegemon gains even if it disproportionately bears the expense alone because of its dominant position in the world system. (Veseth, 2017)

The hegemonic stability theory (HST) is considered to be a set of theories that are related to each other. The existing literature on this theory focuses on the IPE (Kindleberger C. , 1975) (Kindleberger C. , 1986) (Krasner, 1976) (Keohane R. o., 1980) (Keohane R. o., 1977) (Keohane R. , 1984) (Stein, 1984) (Lake, 1984) (Gilpin R. , 1987) (Brawley, 1993).

The main argument is that the presence of a hegemon is needed to have economic cooperation in the international system. In the absence of the order assured by a hegemon, the anarchic nature of the international system will make economic cooperation impossible, even when consistent gains from trade are possible. The HST suggests that a predominant country becomes a hegemon so that it can structure the international economic system to its benefit (Krasner, 1976) (Gilpin R. , 1981) (Keohane R. , 1984) (Brawley, 1993). If the hegemon has a competitive advantage for producing most economic goods, it will move towards a liberal (free-market) world economy. If the hegemon is the most efficient and technologically advanced economic power, it has the most to gain from a participating global market economy. It is also favored by a well-functioning international economic system.

The HST evolved over time into a theory of hegemonic fatigue or decline. It depicts hegemony as a self-limiting, self-defeating, and therefore temporary condition. The argument to support this is that while the hegemonic state bears the burdens of organizing the international system and supplying public goods, free-rider states prosper, expand, and increase the burdens on the hegemon. At some point the hegemon becomes over-committed and in the impossibility of bearing the costs of the system it created. Thus, hegemony collapses in on itself and chaos is present until another hegemonic state arises to restore temporary order. Britain's fall during the 19th century (preceded by the World War I) is the most common example of hegemonic decline as well as the collapse of the Bretton Woods system (considered the mechanism of US hegemony). The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 can be considered as the implosion of Soviet hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe. (Veseth, 2017)

A different version of the HST emphasizes on the view of world leadership (Organski A. a., 1980) (Gilpin R. , 1981) (Modelski G. , 1987) (Thompson, 1988). The theory considers that the hegemon or dominant nation decreases conflict in the interstate system by setting acceptable norms of

behavior. By arbitrating international disputes and enforcing rules, the hegemon stabilizes and increases order within the system.

Keohane's definition of this theory implies that simultaneous marginal advantages in raw material, capital, markets, and competitive advantage should be sufficient. Other scholars stress the importance of overwhelming economic prevalence (Lake, 1984) (Wallerstein, 1984). Wallerstein further develops by saying that it is not sufficient for one power's enterprises simply to possess a greater share of the world market than the rest. Here he considers hegemony in the cases where the advantage is so significant that allied powers are client states and opposing major powers feel somewhat frustrated and fairly defensive regarding the hegemon (Wallerstein, 1984).

Other scholars persist with overwhelming military dominance, specifically in power projection technologies (Modelski G. , 1987) (Modelski G. a., 1988) (Thompson, 1988). Modelski, within his 'Long-Cycle' model, suggests that a nation becomes a hegemon when it has 50 percent or more of the world's naval capability (Modelski G. a., 1988). Naval capability is considered a good measure for a nation to project power beyond its own borders.

Within the last two centuries, the majority of HST scholars agree on the existence of two hegemonies. These are Great Britain from 1815 until 1939 and the US from 1945 until current times (Krasner, 1976) (Gilpin R. , 1981) (Brawley, 1993).

Scholars of HST stress that both the US and Britain advocated for a liberal international economic system in their time as world hegemonies. They consider that because of this fact, since 1815, international trade has grown within the world. Scholars of the theory further argue that this growth was aided by the hegemonic power that guided exchange rates, decreased tariffs, among others. (Kindleberger C. , 1983) (Kindleberger C. , 1975) (Gilpin R. , 1987). It is considered that the international marketplace will collapse because of rampant nationalism without the existence of a hegemon (Kindleberger C. , 1986) (Gilpin R. , 1987)

### 4.3 DIFFERENT THEORIES, DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

#### 4.3.1 Neo-realism vs Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberals and neo-realists agree to the importance of national security and economic welfare; however, they differ in relative emphasis on these goals. David Baldwin in his book *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* cites Charles Lipson, who argues that international cooperation is more likely in economic issue areas than in those concerning military security. Since neo-realists tend to study security issues and neo-liberals tend to study political economy, their differing estimates of the ease of cooperation may be related to the issues they study from here we can say that neoliberals focus more on the economic resources of the hegemon and that neorealists focus more on security, or military power. (Baldwin, 1993)

Institutions and Regimes, here neorealists and neoliberals recognize the abundance of international regimes and institutions that have emerged since 1945. They differ on the significance of these institutions. This debate regards the neoliberal claim that international regimes and institutions more broadly, have become significant in world politics. They believe that neo-liberals overestimate the extent to which institutions can "mitigate anarchy's constraining effects on inter-state cooperation" (Grieco 1988a:485). Neo-liberals claim that a hegemon creates a liberal system and institutions to stabilize and aid the hegemon, while for neo-realists the state is considered the supreme power and that institutions hold no effect. (Baldwin, *Neoliberalism, Neorealism, and World Politics*, 1993)

#### 4.3.2 Realism vs Gramscianism

The very nature of realist and Gramscian theories varies. While realism is a problem-solving theory, and takes the existing world order as given and structured in a particular way, Gramscian scholarship is a critical theory, questioning the prevailing international order and world system. (Konrad, 2012)

Realism, as noted by scholars like Bieler, and Mortonand and Joseph, hegemony in realist school of thought is limited to a single dimension of dominance which is based on and achieved through economic and military capabilities of an actor. Political and cultural aspects of a state are not

considered in realism - the focus lies on military and economic power mainly – i.e. hard power. It is because of anarchic structure of the IR and states' ultimate goal of survival. To survive, one must ensure it can protect itself from external threats and offensive rivalries. The only way to guarantee survival is military power. Additionally, awareness of a self-help system creates fear and mistrust about other actors' incentives. Depending on the particular theory of realism, it is either human nature or anarchic structure that pushes actors to seek for power, which ensures survival. Gramscianism ideas, in contrast, reject the hard power alone as a way to achieve dominance and leadership. For the Gramscian school, cultural leadership is emphasized as a condition adding to actors' power and influence. Attractive culture, ideology, values and institutions are valuable features that can make other actors follow, admire and see the actor as an example, subsequently increasing its power and influence. This cultural leadership can be viewed synonymously as soft power. For Gramscianism, leadership is based on both: power and consent – i.e. combination of soft and hard power that an actor holds, with soft power' (consent) primacy over coercion.

While the two schools of thought both accept the importance of coercive power and military capabilities of an actor, meaning assigned to it is very different. In realism, coercive power is central. It is a goal of actors to increase their power, considering increase of their odds of survival. Gramscianism, however, puts primacy on consent, emphasizing coercion as a tool to keep one's hegemony. For the establishment of hegemony, the coercive power of an actor is in focus in Gramscianism.

Furthermore, whilst realism assumes states as the primary actors of the IR, a neo-Gramscian state is rather construction of political and civil society – state is comprised of a ruling class of a society. And therefore, a social class can establish its ruling role only by creating consent among other social classes, translating their preferences, ideas and values as universal. And for this reason, Gramscian scholarship is more complex when compared with realism. While realism is focused on power relations, Gramscianism emphasizes social forces and material capabilities of an actor.

## 5 ANALYSIS

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Once the theoretical foundations and background information is in place, it is now possible to move towards the analysis part where theoretical considerations will be placed in practice. This chapter starts with some background information on the historical context. The focus here is laid on the US emergence as a great power after the World War II. Further, theories` and approaches` assumptions and explanations will be placed under a certain historical context in order to illustrate the theory. Finally, a comparison between the conceptualizations of hegemony will be established.

### 5.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Most commonly throughout the literature on the US hegemony it is noted that the post-war period is associated with the emergence of the US hegemony. Following the World War II, the economy of the US started booming. Along with increasing economic power and prosperity of its citizens, a belief in the state`s economic and military capabilities to maintain peace and shape world order emerged. (Digital History, 2016)

The Cold War and a clash of two great powers, the Soviet Union and the US, was a period of a bipolar world order or balance. The US, entangled in the Cold War, maintained substantial military capabilities and continuously invested in military weapons. Besides military spending, the US provided aid to war-devastated European countries under the Marshall Plan. This in turn was beneficial for both ends, as the US maintained markets for its goods and was recognized to play a central role in economic affairs, while countries under the Marshall Plan enjoyed the aid provided. (InfoUSA, n.d.) Consequently, a need to restructure international monetary arrangements was recognized by the US. Subsequently, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were created in order to ensure an open capitalist international economy.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, caused by its` economic stagnation, marked the end of the bipolar era in global politics (Waltz K. N., 1999). The US after the cold war emerged as a superpower as there was no state powerful enough to challenge the US dominance and thus no competition of balance of power (Beinart, 2008). The US continued to grow and

expand the power through economic growth, technological advancement, increasing military power and subsequently having influence on entire global social order. (Edgar, 2005)

## **5.2 HEGEMONY UNDER REALISM, LIBERALISM AND GRAMSCIANISM**

### **5.2.1 Neo-realism**

As discussed in theory chapter, classical and structural realism differs in certain assumptions held and explanation on why states seek power. It is human nature for the former and anarchic structure of international system for the latter. However, as the focus in this paper is laid on hegemony, there is no need to go in depth into discussions on reasons behind power and will. It is rather more useful to look at the qualities of an actor if it should become a hegemon, and conditions within the international system that would allow for it to become one.

The realism theories reviewed in this paper view the international system as competitive and hostile, where power is the main determinant of events. Power, in realism, is comprised by mainly material capabilities of an actor. Besides sharing common assumptions such as states as central actors in IR, their rationality and pursuit of survival by means of power, only neo-realism speaks of hegemony in more depth. It is offensive realism that explains hegemony – it is the ultimate gain of actors. It is conceptualized as a condition in the international system when there is only one major power. Defensive realism, in comparison, maintains that hegemony is not a preferable scenario in the international system.

As realism maintains, if a hegemon is to emerge, rivalries of hegemony would attempt to counter-balance and end the hegemony. Put in other words, unipolarity would result in attempts from other actors to end the hegemony and, therefore, unipolarity leads towards multipolarity and therefore is never stable. As Waltz himself stated, two competing powers is the smallest number possible in a self-help system and thus unipolarity, or hegemony, is the least durable configuration of the international system.

Looking at historical events, the world system after the end of the Cold War is seen as unipolar by Waltz and defensive realism. In such situations, as the theory maintains, balancing against the pole should occur. However, immediate counter-balancing against the US did not occur. This is simply

because there were fewer states that could challenge the US if compared with previous periods, due to the effects of the global wars. Yet Waltz argues that balancing is expected to occur (Waltz K. , 2002). Other realists like Randall Schweller (1999), Michael Mastanduno (1997), and Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels (1999) agree with Waltz’s prediction. After all, as Waltz (2002) himself notes, the theory is limited as per the prediction of time - in this case when exactly the balancing on the international system will occur. Further, Waltz emphasizes that his theory does not explicitly state that balancing is inevitable. As he argues, the balancing behavior is a strategy of survival, and it is only one of few, whereas bandwagoning is another. Given that states act rationally, the decision of strategy depends on a cost-benefit evaluation. (Waltz K. N., 2000) This claim is supported by scholars who argue that the US since the end of Cold War has provided every incentive for its allies to keep the status quo and not balance against it. It was achieved through economic measures and cooperation, such as the Bretton Woods institutions. Although the focus of realists is on power and such measures are not in focus, it is still relevant to mention these incentives, given that from the power perspective no actor was able to challenge the US unipolarity. Rational costs versus benefits valuation in this case explains why no challenge and balancing occurred against the US.

Further, followers of defensive realism thought maintain that the pole's power and dominance will eventually be weakened because of two reasons. Firstly, because of other actors` attempt to balance against the pole. And secondly, because the dominance of a pole is usually associated with certain costs, which in turn weakens the pole itself.

The US, viewed in this respect, prevented a potential counter-balancing action from its allies by providing troops in conflict prone areas, in this way offering the necessary security and thus minimizing the participation in an arms race by other actors. Even though such a provision could prevent the threat of other actors` increase of military and posing a threat towards the US hegemony, it is a costly provision requiring substantial economic and military capabilities.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the major threat for the US security disappeared. And as realists argue, constancy of threat results in constancy of policy, whereas absence of threat leads to inconsistent policies. An illustrative example is the collapse of Yugoslavia followed by a genocidal

war among successor states. Such a conflict did not directly threaten the US security. However, it acted to end the conflict by making Bosnia's peril an issue in the forthcoming presidential election. And this move of the US presents very well how the US policy was generated not by security threats or interests, but rather political interests and national ambition to sustain its leadership position in Europe. (Waltz K. , 2002)

The multipolar world order has resulted in two world wars and can hardly be described as stable. The bipolar era, though, offered a more stable period of history. Competition between the US and the Soviet Union presented a period of tension and anxiety; however, it was relatively stable. The emergence of the US as a dominant state and unipolarity has resulted in major changes in international politics and a change of world order. The total number of armed conflicts has decreased, except the fact that there was an increase in terror attacks throughout the years following 9/11. (Lundestad & Jakobsen, 2013) However, as both Waltz and Mearsheimer argue, change in world order does not imply change in structure of the international system. In their opinion, the system is still of anarchic structure, where fear and struggle for survival is still of a central focus of states`. (Waltz K. N., 2000) (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

Concentrated power, even of a benign hegemon, creates mistrust within the international stage as it is so easily misused. It makes weaker states consider the security threat posed and gives reasons to strengthen their positions. As realism holds, the threat will eventually result in the occurrence of balancing. With the power of the US, no country or group of countries had material capabilities and political will to challenge the US unipolarity yet, although scholars of realism are still predicting the balancing to take place in the future.

Mearsheimer and offensive realism theories maintain that hegemony is the ultimate goal of actors. However, global hegemony is virtually impossible in this school and thus the theory suggests focusing on regional hegemony instead. Being the only regional hegemon in the world is ideal situation for actors. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

The US, in Mearsheimer's view, is a regional hegemon, dominating the Western Hemisphere. The post-Cold War world is not unipolar, as Mearsheimer argues, and the US is not a global hegemon. Presence of other great powers in the international world, such as Russia or China, even if could not

challenge the US militarily directly; they do possess nuclear arsenals and could defend their territories. As Mearsheimer notes, the US foreign policy has focused on maintaining the dominant position in the Western Hemisphere while preventing other regional hegemonies from emerging. Acting as an offshore balancer, the US took measures such as troop deployment in Europe and Northeast Asia when the emergence of a potential hegemon was possible. In this way, it is providing security to the weaker states and contains the aggressor. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

Further, offensive realism and Mearsheimer argues that no counter-balancing after the Cold War occurred against the US due to the lack of hegemonic impulse outside the Western Hemisphere. As the argument goes, the geographic position of the US is inconvenient for it to claim offensive and reach for global hegemony. In addition, Mearsheimer maintains that global hegemony is rather impossible due to oceans which limit actors` power-projections of land forces. Other actors such as Western countries, subsequently, threatened by Russia welcomed US troops with no fear of the US turning offensive. If no fear is sensed by the actors, no balancing is taking place. (Mearsheimer J. , 2001)

It is at this point of analysis, when a contradiction of hegemony in realist thinking arises. Global hegemony, in realist thinking, is unattainable as it would contradict the very basic assumption of the anarchic international system. If one state would achieve global hegemony, given that global authority is attained, and would be able to control all the other actors within the system, the system itself would become hierarchical. It is an interesting observation which however would require a more in-depth analysis and discussion which is not the focus of this paper.

To sum up, in the realist school of thought, the US is seen as the leading pole in today`s unipolar system, as defensive realism maintains; or the only regional hegemon globally in multipolar system, as offensive realism claims.

### **5.2.2 Neo-liberalism**

Keohane considers that powerful states wish to create IPE that suits their interests and ideologies. He focuses on the maximization of economic power and not military force. Here he states that economic resource power is stronger, more influential, and practical compared to utilizing military force. Hegemonic leadership takes advantage of the interest of other states. It wants to persuade

others to adhere to its vision of world order and to submit to its leadership. It offers a sense of stability by reducing transaction costs and uses its resources to establish institutions. (Keohane R. , 1984)

The post-World War II and the pre-Cold War is an example here, as the US created a liberal system to keep in check the Soviet Union. This was a capitalist world political economy build upon multilateral principles and embodying rules that the US agreed with. The US leadership of North Atlantic Treaty Organization is also relevant to mention here.

Keohane mentions two requirements of hegemony: one is productivity in manufacturing and control over capital, and the second is possession of raw materials. The influence effect done by hegemonic countries is presented in steps. The creation of a stable monetary system meant to facilitate liberal international trade and payment as the first. After, it provides an open market for goods. And finally, the control of access to oil at in appearance stable prices. This is done through the establishment of the International Monetary Fund, International Trade Organization, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and World Bank, as well as the American dominance over international oil. The time frame for these actions is from 1943 to 1973 with examples of hegemonic cooperation as the ones with Great Britain and France in controlling Arab oil, the Sterling-Dollar oil problem, etc. (Keohane R. , 1984)

Neo-liberals consider that the dominance of one great power may contribute to order in world politics, in specific circumstances, however they do not consider it a sufficient condition or that it is necessary. They state that hegemony is connected in complex ways to cooperation and institutions, such as international regimes. A successful hegemonic leadership is considered to depend on a certain form of asymmetrical cooperation. (Keohane R. , 1984) The hegemon has a distinctive role, offering its partners leadership in return for submission; however, what distinguishes it from an imperial power, is the fact that it cannot create and enforce rules without some sort of consent from other sovereign states. As the interwar experience shows, material predominance alone is not sufficient for stability or effective leadership. The hegemon invests resources in institutions in order to make sure that its rules will guide the behavior of other countries. Cooperation can be supported

by hegemony, and hegemons need cooperation in order to create and enforce rules. (Keohane R. , 1984)

Hegemony and cooperation are not alternatives to each other; they are often linked to one another. To analyze the relationships between hegemony and cooperation, one must consider that coercion is always possible in world politics and that conflicts of interest never disappear even if there are important common interests. Cooperation must not be considered as the absence of conflict, which is an important element of IR, but as a process that involves the usage of discord in order to stimulate mutual adjustment. (Keohane R. , 1984)

### 5.2.3 Neo-Gramscian analysis

World hegemony in neo-Gramscian scholarship is defined in three structures combined: social, economic and political. Thus, hegemony is expressed through universal norms, institutions and mechanisms which establish international rules of behavior to be followed.

The end of the World War II represents the US` emergence as a superpower and what Cox calls *Pax Americana* (Cox R. W., 1993). Through this period, the US internationalized its` liberal ideology, which became common sense and was transferred internationally (D`Attoma, 2011). Combined military-political and economic-cultural powers of the US have widely established its legitimacy as a global leader (Hunt, 2007).

Following the World War II, Western European countries along with Japan, threatened by the Soviet Union and so negatively perceived communism, turned to the US for leadership. And this presented the US with an opportunity to establish its hegemonic power. During the Cold War, the US had two objectives: ensuring the spread of capitalism and establishing its hegemony within the capitalist world. These objectives were enforcing one another. To facilitate trade and economic development within the capitalist block, the US has established an international economic framework - the Bretton Woods system. The system created an international financial system and along with institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund aimed to coordinate economic growth and bring the capitalist style open economic system internationally, except for the socialist block. Debtor states were dependent on the US` economic policy. Through the establishment of Bretton Woods institutions, the culture and ideas of the US were transferred

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to the recipients of the US provisioned economic and military protection. (Iseri, 2007) (D'Attoma, 2011)

A crisis in hegemony, as Gramsci notes, occurs when social groups and political leaders separate within a state. In such a situation, if a new ruling class reaches consent with other classes and overthrows the existing hegemon, it would mark a creation of new hegemonic bloc. (Cox R. W., 1993) The 1960's illustrates a decline or crisis of the US hegemony. An attempt of the developing world to separate themselves from the US hegemony was made through 1964's poorer states of the world organized into the Group of 77, demanding a 'New International Economic Order'. If such a coalition would have been successful in bringing about a radical social transformation, a new historical block would have emerged. However, the US responded to the coalition through persuasion and coercion: by backing coups in Latin America and other developing nations, while providing aid to the developing world countries. (Hunt, 2007)

The liberal economic order that the US helped create brought benefits to all participants. The aid and investments that facilitated the reconstruction of a war devastated Western Europe and Japan is seen as diplomacy of the US (Kunz, 1997). Diplomacy, as a foreign policy tool, was part of a bigger policy of the US - a multilateral new international order. Bilateral policies associated with the inter-war period were highly discouraged (Pollard, 1985). As Joseph argues, the post-war era is "*based on far reaching changes in the structure of society, the organization of production and the related deep hegemony.*" (Konrad, 2012). China, as an example, has long been resisting the US interference in the region until recent decades. Access to the US capital, market, technology and education – crucial elements of China's development strategy, made it inevitable for China to drop its resistance to the US's interference (Hunt, 2007).

The legitimacy of the US is reflected in the international regime through a set of norms and institutions, which were built and maintained not only by force but also consent. The global order was shaped by the US vision, leadership and generosity. European and Japan's fragile economies' integration and recovery, institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund, the world free trade system, the promotion of human rights on

international stage – all are results of the US hegemony through economic, political and cultural structures. (Hunt, 2007)

Further, Joseph Nye emphasizes on the cultural leadership that the US has established based on attractive culture and ideology and cites Marlowe: *“US supremacy today extends to the economy, currency, military areas, lifestyle, language and the products of mass culture that inundate the world, forming thought and fascinating even the enemies of the United States”* (Nye J. S., 2002, p. 545). Cox himself elaborates on cultural leadership of the US, claiming that *“the American way of life has never been a more powerful model... [and] American pop culture has projected an image of the good life that is a universal object of emulation”* (Cox R. , 1995, p. 45).

As Michael Hunt concludes in his book, the emergence of the US hegemony is explained through *“accumulation of economic might, the development of a keen sense of national purpose, and the rise of a formidable state with a knack for pursuing international goals with deliberation and patience.”* (Hunt, 2007, p. 308). These combinations of material, ideological and institutional features are the structures that are necessary for a hegemon to emerge in the neo-Gramscian school of thought.

### **5.3 HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY**

By analyzing the HST it can be observed that scholars explain the great depression as the result of a failure to assume hegemonic leadership (Kindleberger C. , 1975) (Gilpin R. , 1981) (Keohane & Nye, 1989).

The argument is that following the World War I, Great Britain was not economically powerful enough anymore to guide the international economy as it once did. As a consequence, being at a competitive disadvantage during the 1920s Great Britain became reluctant in supporting the liberal international trade regime. Instead, the country worked to create a separate trading bloc within a more solid British Empire. Even though they were economically dominant at the time, the US was not willing to take on the role of hegemonic leadership with the costs that it implied. As a direct result of these actions a worldwide proliferation of short-term mercantilist interests occurred, causing the international economy to fall apart. Considering that hegemonic leadership relies on both military and economic dominance, Gilpin states that the ‘law of uneven growth’ tends to

weaken the position of the hegemon in time. Here he mentions a combination of three factors: the first is represented by the costs of keeping dominance within the system including military spending, support to allies, and money spent in order to coordinate the global economy; the second is considered to be the loss of economic and technological leadership in favor other states because of decreasing innovation, eroding natural resources, as well as the tendency of the hegemon to prioritize consumption over investment; and the third is the dispersal of military and economic technology from the hegemon (Gilpin R. , 1981).

Arthur Lewis offers some empirical evidence to HST in the field of political economy (Lewis, 1978). He has shown that the two periods of the highest growth within the international economy (1853-1873, and 1951-1973) are during the eras of solid British and American economic and political hegemony. Also, the period of little or no hegemonic power (1913- 1945) had barely any growth within the world economy and had two world wars and a great depression (Lewis, 1970) (Lewis, 1978). Kindleberger has also shown that the great depression of the 1930s was mainly the result of the US` failure to take hegemonic leadership after Great Britain`s unwillingness to do so because of its` shrinking power (Kindleberger C. , 1975).

#### **5.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

It is now finally time to move towards a comparative analysis of the concept of hegemony. This chapter will outline the features of hegemony under each of the theories discussed throughout this paper. Additionally, this chapter will answer the research questions formulated in the very beginning of this paper:

- How do various schools of IR define and understand hegemony?
- How do the different approaches to hegemony support historical events and how do they explain it?

These research questions were guiding the entire process of research and theoretical background and analysis chapters of this paper. Nevertheless, it is of importance to highlight the answers found to these research questions before drawing conclusions.

Hegemony in the realism school of thought can be understood through offensive realism, as only Mearsheimer conceptualizes hegemony in his work from realism theories reviewed. Hegemony in Mearsheimer's work is understood as one state dominating the rest in the system, and the hegemon is the only great power in the system. Global hegemony, thus, is hardly possible in realism thought. Because of existence of several great powers in the international system, China and Russia to mention a few, the US is not a global hegemon. Therefore, the analysis is based on the regional hegemony of the US. Power, in realism thought, is comprised by material capabilities of an actor. Internal features of a state such as ideologies or cultures are disregarded, since actors are assumed to be of the same nature: seeking for survival and therefore focused on power relations in a self-help system. The US, in this respect, became a regional hegemon due to its military capabilities. It is of course worth to mention its size of population, economic wealth, natural resources and technology that favors its power capabilities. In addition, following the world wars, there was no actor strong enough to challenge the US regionally, nor globally. Therefore, balancing did not occur and other actors' pursuit of power did not result in changes of world order. The exclusive focus on power relations and material capabilities is what distinguishes realist hegemony.

Keohane and neo-liberalism thought considers that hegemonic powers must control raw materials, sources of capital, markets and possess competitive advantages in producing highly valued goods. Keohane's emphasis is based on the economic influence of the hegemon. Control over the four sets of resources mentioned above helps a state punish its enemies and aid its allies. Important to mention here is the fact that a hegemon builds a liberal system, through institutions, which then is considered to run independently of the hegemon and continues after its decline. Cooperation is also mentioned as an important factor, as it is considered to lead to the hegemon's decline. Keohane discusses the influence effect caused by hegemonic countries: the creation of a stable monetary system meant to facilitate liberal international trade and payment; the provision of an open market for goods and control over the access to oil at stable prices. The historical examples here are the establishment of the International Monetary Fund, International Trade Organization, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and World Bank, and the American dominance of international oil. The time period stated is from 1943 to 1973 which also offers examples of hegemonic cooperation such as that with Great Britain and France in controlling Arab oil, etc.

Neo-Gramscian scholarship conceptualizes hegemony as an order within international economy with a dominant mode of production spread throughout countries. Further, a combination of coercion and consent is of necessity for a state to become a hegemon. However, consent has primacy in this school of thought, whereas coercion is recognized as a necessity to keep hegemony, not to establish it. According to the Neo-Gramscian belief, Cox sees the current global supremacy of the United States as an outward expansion of the American historical bloc and its legitimating ideology of neoliberalism. Therefore, the neo-Gramscian school of thought explains the emergence of the US hegemony through the establishment of the Bretton Woods agreement: international institutions created to coordinate economic growth, ensure security militarily and achieve the consensus of neo-liberal capitalism. Therefore, put in Cox theory, the US hegemony is comprised by the establishment of universal norms, institutions and mechanisms which set the rules of behavior.

	Neo-Realism	Neo-liberalism	Neo-Gramscianism
Actors to pursue hegemony	States as rational actors	States as rational actors	States comprised of a ruling class of civil and political societies
Conditions for hegemony	Material capabilities of military and economy to sustain and increase actors` hard power	Control over resources: raw materials, sources of capital, markets and possess competitive advantages in producing highly valued goods	Material and social capabilities of three pillars: social (ideas and norms), political (institutions) and economic (material power)

Figure 5 Comparative features of hegemony in neo-realism, neo-liberalism and neo-Gramscianism

It is apparent now that the conceptualizations of hegemony differ across the theories of IR due to underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions held by each theory. However, detaching variables of hegemony in each theory from its philosophical assumptions and world view, one can compare the concept of hegemony through the theories without contradicting the theories themselves.

All theories conceptualize hegemony that is achieved by a state. In realism and liberalism, it is the main actor of international relations. Neo-Gramscianism school stands out here because of its different view of what comprises a state. Whereas realism and liberalism maintains that is built on political society, neo-Gramscianism rejects this idea and suggests including civil society, because social forces influencing political society usually comes from civil society. It is not to say that realism or liberalism rejects civil society, but the basic assumptions and focus on a state level is the reason of this exclusion from analysis. Therefore, the first variance in conceptualization of hegemony within the theories is the level of analysis.

Further, all the differences arise when it comes to conditions for hegemony. As outlined in figure 5 above, conditions for hegemony in neo-realism is limited to coercive power of an actor, in neo-liberalism, economic measures are in focus, and neo-Gramscian school is concerned with both coercion and economic capabilities of an actor, along with social and political factors.

Neo-realism places its central focus on military power as a necessary condition for a hegemon to emerge. It is power relations that determine the world order and thus the most powerful actor, who is willing to, can impose its rules on the rest through coercion. As noted, global hegemony under neo-realism is of low chance and thus regional hegemony is the ultimate favorable position that an actor can seek for. In neo-Gramscian scholarship, military power of an actor is also placed as important. However, here the underlying difference is that while neo-realism maintains coercive power as a way to establish hegemony, neo-Gramscian theory is only concerned with coercion for sustaining hegemony. In this theory, coercive power of a hegemon is needed at times when a potential new hegemonic bloc could emerge, or when actors would start aggression. However, the use of military power under neo-Gramscian school of thought must be legitimate. This means, consent between actors on the international stage must be in place before a hegemon can exercise coercive power. Neo-liberal theory, in contrast, emphasizes collaboration and coercive power can only be used to protect the economic world order established by a hegemon.

The role of institutions is central to neo-liberal hegemony. Through international institutions, a hegemon establishes its legitimate order and leadership. Because hegemony is understood in terms of economic power of an actor, institutions serve to maximize absolute economic gains within a

system. Neo-realism, in comparison, does not consider institutions of a high importance or influence within the international stage. Neo-realism does not, however, neglect cooperation and thus institutions; however, it is only in situations where it's beneficial for an actor. Furthermore, it is maintained that cooperation between actors does not last long due to the actors' mistrust and fear. The Neo-Gramscian school of thought, in contrast, emphasizes both economic capabilities and role of institutions for establishment of hegemony. Institutions are seen as tools of establishing hegemon's legitimacy, and, in certain cases, can be used as a coercive tool to punish actors who don't consent. Economic capabilities in neo-Gramscianism are important not in terms of power, but rather means of producing and spreading hegemon's values and ideas. Hegemony, according to neo-Gramscianism, is achieved through spread and persuasion of hegemon's philosophical and moral world view. This ideological and cultural leadership, a necessary condition for an emergence of hegemony, is the distinguishing feature of the theory. Realism, in this stance, entirely disregards internal features of an actor such as culture or political order, as irrelevant to emergence or maintenance of hegemony.

Visible from the analysis, the different theories offer different understandings to the concept of hegemony with varying meanings assigned to the notion. Whilst some share common features, none explain hegemony in a same way. It is, however, the philosophical considerations and view towards the world that allows one to fully understand the complexities of hegemony under each theory.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

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This paper aims to gather literature available on the concept of hegemony, viewed in the field of IR. The particular focus is based on three schools of IR: realism, liberalism and Gramscianism. The purpose is to present the collected literature in a comparative manner along with practical explanations of emergence of the US hegemony.

From the analysis conducted, three main areas of variance between hegemony in the theories became evident: conceptualization of hegemony, actors who pursue hegemony and conditions under which a hegemon can emerge and sustain its hegemony.

Under neo-realism, hegemony is defined as a great power’s domination of system, when it is being the only great power within. Neo-liberal school defines hegemony as a preponderance of material resources and thus economic dominance of a state within a system. Neo-Gramscian scholarship views hegemony as a dominating structure of a system, constituted from matching ideas, institutions and material capabilities.

While in neo-realism and neo-liberalism states, being rational actors, are the main actors of international system, neo-Gramscian state is a construct made of social classes, including civil and political societies.

Variables influencing hegemonic system include: coercion through military power of a hegemon in neo-realism theory, consent through economic dominance in neo-liberalism, and economic, political and social structures` construction in neo-Gramscian theory. In other words, under neo-Gramscianism, an actor must be capable of reaching consent within a system on dominant culture and values, institutions and modes of production.

Visible from the analysis is the fact that the different theories offer different understandings to the concept of hegemony with varying meanings assigned to the notion. Whilst some share common features, none explain hegemony in the same way. It is, however, the philosophical considerations and view towards the world that allows one to fully understand the complexities of hegemony under each theory.

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