

THE VALUE OF THE CONCEPT OF HEGEMONY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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“Guicciardini states that for the life of a State two things are absolutely necessary: arms and religion.”

Antonio Gramsci

The great influence of Gramsci's work on Political Science in the twentieth century has continued to extend also into one of its derivations, the theory of International Relations. The great Italian thinker was interested in understand the forces that produce the stability of power relations in politically organized societies, sustained by a State. What was the reason for a social order founded on inequality and exploitation of the majority by the hands of a ruling minority to be long lasting? From his studies of the works of Renaissance masters Francesco Guicciardini and Nicolló Machiavelli, Gramsci came up with a concept of hegemony that, with the dissemination of his work in Italy after the end of the Second World War by the Communist Party that he helped to found, became widely disseminated and debated around the world. Firstly by the Political Science, but it very briefly transcended to other areas, such as the Economics and the International Relations.

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Gramsci's discovery rescued Marx's analysis of the social function of ideology. For the German thinker, ideology could be understood as a false consciousness, a fetishized and mystified vision of reality that is broadcasted by the dominant classes with the function to conform the subalterns to their oppressed condition. In ideological perspective, social oppression is seen as some kind of inexorable fate, a God's will, and so on. Gramsci used the image of the cement that holds the bricks of social structure to describe the function of ideology. In this sense, it is one of the "two things [that] are absolutely necessary" to an organized political system, i.e., a State. In his words:

"Guicciardini's formula can be translated into several other less drastic formulas: strength and consensus; coercion and persuasion; Church and State; political society and civil society; political and moral (ethical-political history of Croce); law and freedom; order and discipline; or with a view implicit literary flavor, violence and fraud" (Gramsci 1976, 137-138).

Defined in this formula as the sum of coercion and consent, hegemony fulfills the essential role of maintaining a stable social order and its higher form of political organization, the State, cementing the construction of the social structure. In this role, the strength of hegemony takes place on two levels, as suggested by the Gramscian formula. On the material level, coercion is exerted not only by the monopoly of legitimate violence by the State power, but also by the subsumption of social subjects to obligations and requirements imposed by the economic conditions that determine the form of access to the means of production and subsistence controlled by the ruling class. At the level of ideology, on the other hand, the consensus is produced by the introjections into the same social individuals of values and symbolic projections conforming a particular ethical conduct and a set of intersubjective reasons that shape the various forms of belonging to the structure of society.

The modern secular State, which emerged with the end of absolutism, had to create and develop mechanisms and procedures to maintain the crucial decisions on the continuity of social relations within the limits necessary for the reproduction of structures of domination and their forms of sociability. In place of the will of the sovereign and the religious preaching, it has established an institutionalized system of public choices under the aegis of the democratic exercise of popular sovereignty defining what the State does and does not do.

“social domination organized by it is a ‘selective regulatory system’ (Offe 1984). That is to say, the adoption of public policies ‘functional’ to the system operates from the setup of **exclusion rules** through which alternatives policies cannot occur” (Faria and Winckler 1994, 17).

Such rules and mechanisms conform a network of institutions with the purpose of effecting the regulation of the social system as a whole. The effectiveness of this regulation is what gives stability and ensures the continuity of the organized society in the State form. The ruling class can exercise its power within appropriate rules and the lower classes become conformed to their status of social and political subordination and economic exploitation, adapting to the prevalent forms of sociability. It was in this sense that Marx and Engels identified the origin of the State in the division of society into classes. Before the formula popularized as the “central committee of the ruling class”, the State, as presented in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* or in the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Marx and Engels 1976; Engels 1982), emerges as a structure created to give unit to this social order founded on the division and domination that separates the human community in classes with fundamentally different rights and obligations. Or, in his view, divided between those who only have rights and those who only have obligations.²

The foundational norm of organized societies in States was the regulation of the access and the use of the fundamental means of production, the land, because in its beginnings there were only agricultural societies. If this was initially imposed by force, in the form of a standard coercive, soon came to combine the mechanisms of production of a consensus of religious nature, as stated in the quotation above from Guicciardini reported by Gramsci. The hegemonic character was completed with the investiture of religion as the first ideological apparatus of the State.

The development and increase in the level of complexity of social relations were also making the State structure more complex, giving rise to new features, activities and functions. One of these new functions was the relations

² As stated in the Manifesto, “Until now, the history of all societies that have existed until today has been the history of class struggle” (Marx and Engels 1848, 21).

with other companies, in the way where evolution itself was multiplying social interactions and developing new activities, especially trade, for which the geographic scale was expanded by connections of long distance. The war was the movement by which relations of coexistence were settled by conquest or balance of power, the first forms of these international relations based on the primeval force. Nevertheless, the need for cooperation was also present during this early period, giving rise to the need for coding these foreign relations to make negotiations possible and feasible for the prevalence of agreements and rules arising from them. That's what the Romans codified as people's right (*jus gentium*).

The so prevalent Eurocentrism in the Social Sciences often indicate the Renaissance period as the moment of emergence of societies organized in States and therefore having a political order characteristic of hegemony.³ A proviso is made to this generalization jurists, once it rightly relate the form of the State to the constitution of a social order based on law. Where there is law, there is some form of institutionalized social relations of power and, therefore, a political structure of State. Obviously one of the most important encodings for social stability is the differences between people, which highlights the division into classes and relations of domination and exploitation that are, as seen in the Marxist view, the foundations of the State.

The same Eurocentric position describes the Treaty of Westphalia as the founding moment of an international order based on a shared notion of law. However, it is worth remembering that even in Europe the characteristics of the modern State were present in Greece or Rome, something that can surely be extended to the China of the Qin dynasty and to the Inca Empire or the Mexico of the Mayas. In all these examples, there was sustained contact, including the establishment of stable patterns of relations between those States and other societies. Therefore it can be inferred that foreign relations were also among the many tasks carried on by these national organizations. This implies the existence of some form of international order, based on alliances, agreements and, as it is well known, on violent conflicts in particular.

³ Yes, because the agreement is not an exclusive feature of democracy. Remember that Gramsci wrote about hegemony from his prison cell under the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini, which, even if making extensive use of violence did not stop developing a hegemonic feature.

Following the typology adopted by Fiori (1997), we can characterize most systems of international relations prevailing in different regions of the world throughout history as imperial types, in that the violence was the predominant force in its constitution. However, to the extent that recourse to coercion came to be undesirable, ineffective or even impossible, due to the evolution of relations between nations, the ties of interdependence, the need for cooperation or whatever, the appeal to consensus gave rise to a new kind of order: the hegemonic order.⁴

Focusing on the European international order, which throughout history has been expanding to the point of covering the whole world, we see the prevalence of an imperial system in its Mediterranean origin, which was replaced by a condition of chaos following the fall of Rome. After its regression during the middle ages, the State returned in the Renaissance, a time when the authority of the Catholic Church on the European political relations had declined. According to the establishment of an interstate international order in the place of a system relatively anarchic under the auspices of the Roman curia hitherto existing in Europe, this order was set up by rules accepted by the participating States. An international right to replace papal edicts that rewrites the relations between the European dynastic states was born. If the Peace of Westphalia is a benchmark of this new reality in foreign nations, its genesis comes from further back in time.⁵

The development of this new environment for relations between nations opened a space for the original statement of their powers, that was the creation of an standard and its obedience. As recalled Susan Strange noticed (1994), the exercise of power has a relational aspect – the ability to force the other's behavior – and a structural aspect, the ability to decide the rules of the game. This step forward in the evolution of the interstate system, the creation of an international law as a result of changing relationships between nations, opened space for the introduction of the kind of world order prevalent since the

⁴ Indeed, the typology is, in our point of view, based on balancing or degree of prevalence duo coercion and consensus. Even in the Roman Empire, the reasons for hegemony were present, just remember the Latinization linguistics, Christianization or the institutions of law.

⁵ In 3100 BC, the Sumerians had already produced a treaty of territorial boundaries.

nineteenth century, an order in which the use of force is being gradually replaced by ideology: the hegemonic order.⁶

The admission of the existence of that other kind of international system was a milestone in the evolution of the scientific field of International Relations. But to make this possible, it was needed the step forward made by the critique to the realist and neorealist tendency and their narrow and economicist view of politics. As far as power is concerned, States are not rational utility maximizers individuals. Political action is not solely devoted to the accumulation of more power. And the balance of power, the impossibility to destroy the other, is not the only reason for stability in international relations (Cox 1999b). Men, their invention and societies are much more complex than the vision created by the crude utilitarianism of conventional sociology and economics makes believe. And above all, humanity and its forms of collective experience have history, is always changing, and never pursues the same goals or work in the same way.

The alternative perspective stressed in Guicciardini's formula opened a new and successful horizon for the development of the discipline of International Relations, which allowed the proposition of theories that could take into account a greater portion of its real complexity, overcoming the easy solution of realist and economicist simplification. Robert Cox called this perspective "critical theory", as opposed to that of "problem solving" (Cox 1999a). The contrast between the two views is marked, firstly by the totalizing perspective against the particularism of the traditional view; secondly, by the historicity of one as opposed to the abstraction of the other; thirdly, by considering the change as a central element of reality to be explained versus the

⁶ It is important to note the difference between the concepts of hegemony, here taken in the sense of Gramsci, as it is also used by Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi. Although the Marxist inspiration is clear in their works, what for both authors is described as a period of hegemonic organization of the world capitalist system is the relative stability provided by the control of a State and its capitalist ruling class over the main points that structure the international economic relations. Wallerstein (2000) mentions three instances, the agro-industrial, the commercial and the financial ones, for which the hegemonic power of the world economy needs to exert simultaneous superiority to consolidate its domination over the whole system. On the other hand, Arrighi (1996) talks about control over financial networks (cash and credit) and productive (trade and value addition) networks. The two authors do not fail to also point out the military power projection capabilities of this very power worldwide as essential to the exercise of such domination. Outside these hegemonic moments, the world-economy would live an anarchic or chaotic regime in its organization.

static scenario and fixed frame of the orthodoxy; and, fourthly, critical theory sees the possibility of social and political transformation while the conservative viewpoint seeks the restoration of the order.⁷

In this theoretical horizon, the complexity of the many determinations of power relations can be treated as a whole by using the idea of hegemony. Several authors have sought to extend the use of this concept to the context of International Relations. The use of this term, already quite widespread, has served even to just “add an epicyclic coda”⁸ to the dominant theory, without adding anything to the understanding of reality. This is the case, for example, unsuspected economists of neoclassical formation as Robert Gilpin and Charles Kindleberger and their concepts of hegemonic stability. Their propositions are prisoners of the fiction of the rational agent and the methodological individualism that reduces the structural reality to the condition of the State as an actor with interests. This retains the worst of neoclassical economics and the worse of positivist politics, defining the exercise of hegemony as “the provision of public goods necessary for the stability of the international order”, including security, payment methods, institutions, etc. Why does the leader look so benevolent and willing to pay the costs of maintaining expensive military or issue currency for the world market? His compensation would be the generation of a stable climate for business.

A very different perspective comes from the authors influenced by the Marxist tradition where Gramsci was situated. Among them Robert Cox stands out, and it does the so-called English school of international political economy, and its best example, Susan Strange. According to this point of view, what is necessary to understand is business, not stability.⁹

The starting point of Susan Strange (1994) is a methodological critique of the influence of neoclassical economics in the study of international relations with its simplistic reductionism, its abuse of quantitative techniques to describe known things and its “evidence” of what is plain common sense. What she

⁷ Cox mentions some pioneers of this view, besides Machiavelli and Guicciardini cited by Gramsci, in particular the reflections of Giambattista Vico and the precursory ideas of Ibn Khaldun.

⁸ The irony was made by Immanuel Wallerstein.

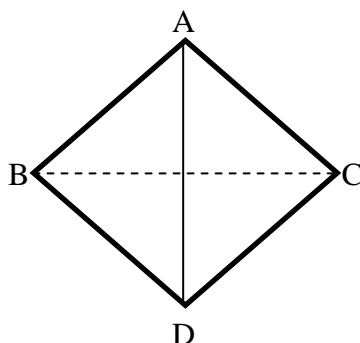
⁹ Especially because it would not otherwise be possible to understand how the hegemonic power itself causes instability (Fiori 2008).

proposes is to understand the link between authority and market, a nexus understood as the influence of reciprocal (a two-way causality) and that she illustrates with the figure of a see-saw. From this relation emerges a hierarchical international system in different relative positions as established from how much power may be exercised by each nation-state on the system as a whole and in relation to others. In explicitation of the sources of that power, we see how dynamic she imagined the arrangement of the interstate world to be.

This power is exercised hegemonically in four distinct levels. In *States and markets* (Strange 1994), she presents a picture of a rhombus formed by four triangles to represent these four sources of power, defined as interactive structures. She defines them as not peculiar to the world system, being also present in small groups of humans, and that she exemplifies citing a family or small village, until the whole world.

In Figure 1, ACD is the productive structure, ABD is security, ABC is finance and BCD knowledge (Strange 1994). The overlap is intentional, because all four spheres are interrelated and influence each other. The power materializes in the control of each of these structures, in the sense of the ability to threaten it or preserve it. The power over the productive structure is the power to decide or to control how goods and services are produced for subsistence, i.e. what should be produced, how it should be produced and using what kind of means among land, capital, labor and technology. The power over the safety of people is fundamentally based on the control of violence, the ability to offer security over essential items such as food distribution and health services, or the administration of justice.

Figure 1: The four structures around the State-market see-saw



The power over knowledge is not merely the control of its generation and dissemination, but also of ideas and beliefs. Developing or acquiring knowledge, controlling access to something desired or respected and dominating the channels of communication and dissemination of knowledge are all special features of structural power.¹⁰ Nowadays, the most important knowledge as a power resource is technology.

Finally, the financial power is the control over credit, which implies the control over purchasing power, or the ability to create credit from nothing. Susan Strange was especially insightful in pointing out the relevance of financial power in times of globalization.¹¹

“the facet that possibly grew in importance more than any other in the last quarter of a century, and has become of decisive importance in international economic relations and competition between companies, (...) its power to determine outcomes – in security, production and research – is enormous (...), credit is what is invested in advanced economies rather than cash, and (...) credit can be created. It does not need to be accumulated. So who is acquiring the trust of others in their ability to create credit will control a capitalist economy – and also a socialist one.” (Strange 1994, 30)

However, it was Robert Cox who developed a theoretical resource with greater ability to explain the issue of power and hegemony in its totality. He named this method of “historical structures”, representative of what he called “limited wholes”. Its starting point is the determination of a world order in which structural causality articulate states and social forces, as shown in Figure 2.

As indicated by the arrows, there is an interconnection between the three levels. The relations between them, however, are not un-linear.¹² It was the transnationalized social forces that have influenced States, which both

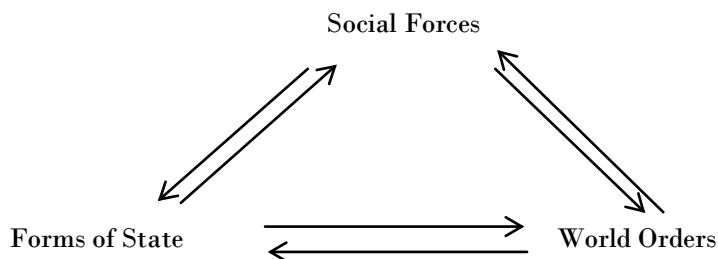
¹⁰ She says: “For this reason, the priesthood in every religion has maintained their power in a more miserly way than the military or noble varieties” (Strange 1994, 30). This and other quotes from original foreign language were translated for us.

¹¹ See about the idea of *casino capitalism* and discussion of the concept of *mad money* in Strange (1998).

¹² In this sense, the criticism directed by Susan Strange of a production rule is unfounded. We imagine that she is extending to Cox the critic focused on the Marxist view prevalent throughout the twentieth century and its production and economic.

shape and are shaped by the international order. Similarly, States also interfere in the action of social forces and these very actions produce effects on the global orders. “Each of these levels can be studied as a succession of rivals structures, a dominant one and an emerging one” (Cox 1999a, 100).

Figure 2: The three levels or spheres of activity



In the structures, three categories of forces interact in each one of them, constituting forces expressed as potential or capacities. They are:

“material capabilities, ideas and institutions. No un-linear determinism must be assumed among these three, the relationship can be assumed to be reciprocal. The question in what sense the power lines moving is always a historical question to be answered by a study of the particular case” (Cox 1999a, 98).

As we interpret Cox’s vision, the endowment of these three elements determines the relative position of each pair of State-national bourgeoisie, which are the stars of this expanding universe that is the international order.¹³ This means that hegemony over this world system is the result of the supremacy in each of these categories of forces.

In defining what elements make up each of the three forces, we see that dialectically the scheme of Robert Cox can be interpreted as including, or perhaps subsuming the conception of Susan Strange at the same time that it is

¹³ The expression expanding universe was borrowed from José Luis Fiori (2008). Likewise, it is yours proposition considered the duet formed by each State and its respective national bourgeoisies as constituent parts of the capitalist world system.

completed and enlightened in some aspects by her work. This procedure will enable these ideas to be taken as a basis for a theoretical step ahead. In this new step we will add a greater precision to the role and scope of each of these levels and associate this analytical procedure to an approach that seeks to develop itself simultaneously at different levels of analysis in order to achieve a the comprehension of the totality. We can therefore move forward in proposing an interpretation of the international order as a system of hegemony that defines the hierarchy of power, the place and function of each of its constituent elements, States and social forces in its composition.

The material capacities are, in the words of Cox, the potential of production and destruction. Their dynamic forms are the technological and organizational capabilities, and their static forms are the natural resources transformed by technology, inventories of equipment (weapons and industries) and the wealth that command them (Cox 1981). This category includes some of the constituent elements of productive structures (production potential), security (potential for destruction), finance (wealth) and knowledge (technology) proposed by Susan Strange, though reconfigured.

The second force are the ideas, divided into two types. Inter-subjective meanings, or common notions of the nature of social relations that lead to the continuation of habits and behavior patterns which lead to the obedience of the rules. And the collective images of social order shared by different human groups in relation to the meaning of the public good, the legitimacy of the existing power or of the justice.

Finally, institutions are the third force: "Institutionalization is a way for stabilizing and perpetuating a certain order." (Cox 1981, 99) Even if they crystallize certain correlation of forces, they also acquire relative autonomy and can become an arena of dispute between antagonistic positions. Indeed, even antagonistic institutions can prevail: "Institutions are an amalgam of particular ideas and material power, which in turn influence the development of the ideas and material capacities." (Cox 1981, 99)

Cox goes on pointing to the close connection between institutionalization and what Gramsci defined as hegemony, inasmuch as they are both means to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. The exercise of violence by the stronger is unnecessary when the weakest accepts the

prevalence of the strongest, and it occurs to the extent that the dominant makes its interests to be seen as everyone's. This is the idea of ideology as a veil to hide the reality described by Marx and adopted in the work of Gramsci and that produces a type of consciousness that makes acceptable by the dominated its condition of inferiority.

It is in this circumstance that hegemony is established. Not as a mere stock of endowment of factors of power, as the theory of hegemonic stability in a form of fetishism of power makes one believe (something already criticized by Cox 1981, 105), but as a particular arrangement or coherent conjunction between a certain configuration of material power (economic and military hierarchy), the prevalent collective image of world order (a certain pattern to be preserved and maintained, including its standards) and the set of institutions that administers this order within an atmosphere of universality (so that it is not seen as a mere instrument of domination of the leading-State).

We will later retake the idea of how the system of hegemony is structured, but still following Robert Cox, it is necessary to shed some light on how the world order is formed and how it is transformed. Consisting of States and markets, as noted by Susan Strange, or of social forces and forms of state, as defined by Cox, the genesis of international relations is explained by historical materialism as resulting from the action of social forces shaped by relations of production (this would constitute a determination in the last instance). Beyond this still very abstract statement, some mediation is needed. The relationships between social forces internal to each State will determine its shape. In capitalism the bourgeoisie is the ruling class and does not need to directly control the State apparatus as it was done by the Chinese mandarins, for example. As mentioned above, the modern State is organized so that there is a selectivity of its actions and policies to which the dominant power of the bourgeoisie is a premise. However, selective control of the ruling class does not make the configuration of the State impervious to other social classes. Commitments as the American New Deal or the European social-democracy are examples of that.

It is this set of national state-bourgeoisie that will coordinate with its counterparts to form the world order, opening space for the phenomenon

understood by Cox as the beyond-border actions of the social forces.¹⁴ Their articulations and common interests create networks of association between factions of the bourgeoisie that influence the direction of the international system as well as the relative power of States. As a result, the range and possibilities of each State-national bourgeoisie are defined by their relative power – or their place in the hierarchy of the world. The marxists called this configuration of power differentials “imperialism”, inasmuch as it is based on certain division of labor between its constituent parts, not only in the economic but also social and political.

It is also the nature of the system of its permanent transformation; its history is an evolutionary process consisting of successive ruptures where stability is an always temporary condition, not its destiny or necessity.¹⁵ What is the necessary for the system is that hegemony is permanently challenged and recurrently disrupted because the logic that articulates it is the competition between states and their national bourgeoisies (Fiori 1997 and 2008).¹⁶ The very internationalization of the States, the production and the finances – one of the characteristics of globalization or globalization of capital –, is part of this competitive effort to remain ahead of its rivals and to acquire new resources of power and new sources of economic surplus.

The internationalization of the State has nothing to do with the idea of emptying the State or the displacement of its sovereignty to the multilateral organizations. States are constituent parts of the system, a reality perceived by Max Weber, and its disappearance would necessarily mean the end of the very international capitalist system. The internationalization that we are dealing with here is exemplified in the phenomenon visible from central banks and ministries of finance and economy, which are fractions of the State

¹⁴ Somehow, Susan Strange (1998) in her analysis of what she called “mad money” also includes the internationalization of social classes in the study of the action of high finance in globalization.

¹⁵ There is an identification here with the research program known as the world systems theory, whose reference authors are Wallerstein and Arrighi, besides the Brazilian Theutonio dos Santos.

¹⁶ We are using the term competition in place of economic competition to emphasize the difference with the economic view that sees competition as producing balance. In fact, it produces winners and losers. Braudel (1987) was right when he said that capitalism is always the monopoly and the use of the State. Monopoly is the position of who wins the competition process in the market and the use of State intervention translates into political power in support of capital accumulation, capital of certain friends of the prince.

internationally articulated, whose links are transmission networks of the interests of the large financial capital, especially the globalized one. This process of globalization has created a political axis, as pointed out by Robert Cox (1981), in which a network of interests articulates the social forces internationally, this also includes government agencies and multilateral organizations where the “big business” (particularly its strategic direction, the big finance) participates as an articulator and beneficiary. The author stresses that this network acts as a body for capital control and planning, and mentions the concept of collective capitalist proposed by Lenin in his famous analysis of imperialism.

To complete these methodological considerations about hegemony, we present below a scheme that seeks to interpret and make more understandable the nature of this kind of world order that is organized in the form of hegemony. In this theoretical route, we set the method to articulate different levels of analysis developed initially by the School of Regulation¹⁷ and discussed in Faria (2007).

Hegemony is a form of exercise of power and the way it is organized in a complex society where the use of violence can only be made in extreme situations. Even if the violence itself is a big business, beyond its intrinsic cost the use of force leads to the disruption of other businesses. The appearance of a stable democracy is the best environment for capital, as it can be seen in the example of the institutional continuity of a century and a half in the U.S. after the American Civil War, not to mention the UK, which opened much longer ago this pattern of predictability in the actions of the rulers. Not coincidentally, these have been the only two world powers in such hegemonic order.¹⁸

After quoting Gramsci when the Italian author asks whether the International Relations precede or follow the fundamental social relations (and

¹⁷ By method we mean a way to make this articulation since combining several plans of analysis is an usual epistemological feature, at least for those who study more complex objects. The regulationist vision is developed in Boyer (2004).

¹⁸ Appearance because, especially in relation to the United States, the abuse of economic power and the selection filters of public policies that are so prominent, in fact, it is a plutocracy of the big businesses and their lobbies. The last promise of change, the election of Barack Obama, was unable to avoid the high finance that exerts control over the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department, not the military industrial complex Pentagon's control over the entire structure and safety USA. That left some crumbs for Medicare.

when the author himself replies “there can be no doubt that follow” Gramsci apud Cox 1983, 133), Robert Cox continues with the following definition:

“Hegemony on the international level is not, then, merely an order among States. It is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production which penetrates into all countries and links other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of social relations that connects international social classes of different countries. The world hegemony can be described as a social structure, economic structure and political structure, and cannot be just one of those things, but all three. The world hegemony is further expressed in universal norms, institutions and mechanisms that establish general rules of behavior for States and those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries, rules that underpin the dominant mode of production” (Cox 1983, 137)

In our analysis, as we have said, we rethink the work of Robert Cox and Susan Strange, especially the first, to establish an analytical framework capable of interpreting this type of world order. The structural arrangement whereby the hegemonic power is exercised is articulated in three levels: a material level, an ideological level and, between the two, the level of institutions. The institutional level is intermediate because these structures are both material – insofar as they have power and rules are binding in relation to the actions of social subjects – and ideological therefore prescribing attitudes and indicating the rights and wrongs in the behavior of the agents. The agents here are the social forces and the States, as Cox defined (1981); or, in a more allegorical and symbolic fashion, “States and markets” Susan Strange (1994); or even “Wars games and games market”, as in José Luis Fiori (2004). The graphical representation of this methodological resource appears in Figure 3.

Starting at first level, we can identify that the factors of power, in material terms, come from four different sources. Firstly, the military, the ability to control the security of the whole system, which involves the provision of deterrence and power projection throughout the geographic area of the world economy. Hence the need for armed forces sufficiently trained and equipped, and ready to work, capable of successfully intervening in any dispute arising, and especially endowed with a significant difference with respect to the action

over long distances. The power of the Royal Navy in the nineteenth century was decisive, as it is the U.S. Air Force since the mid-twentieth century.

The second material factor, control over production, is based on the efficiency of the productive apparatus, especially the industry, in its competitive superiority in relation to other economies in the world and also on a larger scale in terms of production volume. The production factor is complete with control of sources of energy, raw materials and food, and also with the organizational effectiveness, by using methods of management and administration of this structure that contributes to its superiority over the others. It is also necessary to complement this economic supremacy with logistical support that enables to intervene and control the flow of international trade, transport and storage.

A third factor, the finance, encompasses the control of credit and the issuance of means of payment whose convertibility is accepted everywhere. The power over the credit allows the decision on where investments are going to happen and gives access to capital ownership, to influence over political power and so on. The issuance of the convertible currency is not only a feature of seigniorage, but will also allow the foreign exchange arbitrage, relative price control and more.

Finally, and in the fourth place in the material level, the power over technology: possessing the more advanced national innovation system and the ability to develop more efficient ways of producing wealth; to be ahead of competitors to invent new products and processes; and to give security forces the best weapons and the most effective communication systems, etc. All this requires an efficient articulation between business, government and institutes of research, development and scientific production, universities, laboratories. Ultimately, the whole chain of generation and application of knowledge.

The second plan is the ideology, divided into three levels of hegemonic exercise in this context. Its usefulness for the proper functioning of the system is the creation and dissemination of values, ideas and moral principles, and also shared views of ethics, rights and wrongs, the beautiful and the ugly, that provide a relative stability and continuity for the reproduction of social relations fundamental to all areas around the globe that are articulated in shaping the world system.

The first is the sphere of values, in which it is established a collective interpretation of the nature and purpose of the world order, of its moral principles, i.e. a collective ethics. It is also within this sphere that rules of behavior of the agents are defined, as well as the normatization that defines what is the expected behavior of the participants of the system. Such values must be internalized so the behaviors can occur in a proactive manner to the international order, so that eventual anti-systemic actions are avoided. Values act as a kind of filter of attitudes and behaviors to fit them within a range of action consistent with the stability and continuity of their structures. The hegemonic power is not only a propagator as it needs to be in its actions an example of obedience to these values.

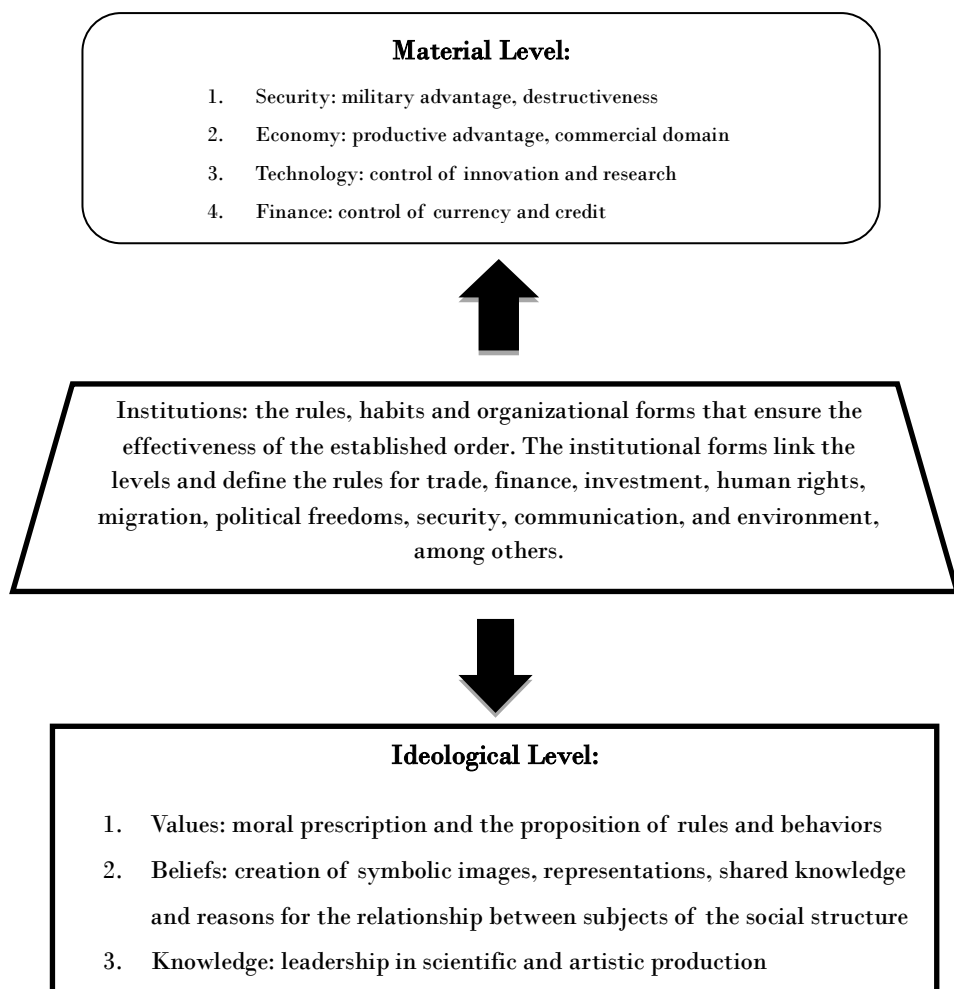
The second sphere of this ideological level is the shared beliefs, images and symbols, collective representations and the reasons that govern the interaction between subjects. In this sphere, the definitions of right and wrong, the beautiful and the ugly will shape a worldview shared by the whole world system, from which arise a moral and an aesthetic charring the behavior and work of members of the international society. Robert Cox defines this as the sphere of inter subjective reasons, which directs behaviors and works with the aim of ensuring the maintenance and widened reproduction of the dominant mode of production, of its connections with other subaltern modes of production and of its forms of organic sociability.¹⁹

A third sphere is one where it is generated the knowledge that creates and justifies the beliefs and values in the form of education and scientific and artistic production, besides its laws, conventions and techniques. It is certainly the most fluid of all three, and the one which can more easily spread all over the structure of the world system. The control over knowledge is not only necessary to the normal operation of the world political economy, because their production and dissemination is the core of the ideological hegemony, but is also crucial for hegemony on the material level. Through knowledge it is possible to exercise power over the production, on the ability of destruction and war, and on the processes of innovation, including in the sphere of finance. If the

¹⁹ The term organic has been used by Gramsci in the sense of prevalent in long term. There are forms of sociability that are this type, permanent, as opposed to cyclical variants.

permanent revolution of the mode of production is a fundamental aspect of capitalism, as Marx noted, what enables this continued transformation is knowledge.

Figure 3: The three levels of exercise of hegemony



The ideological and material levels are connected and interdependent, and what makes this connection between both is the institutional level. There is no need to deepen the analysis of the specific contours of the structures that

constitute what might be called the mode of regulation of the world order. Enough is to refer to what has already been well established in the definition of the five structural forms of the school of regulation, including a discussion of what its authors called “modality of adherence to the international regime.” (Boyer 2004; Faria 2004 and 2007) The key here is to understand the functioning of these structures that give effective validity to the rules and habits of everyday life and shape an organizational framework that ensures the continuity of the established order in all its dynamics even through a filter between the various alternative possibilities of its development, which emerged along its permanent process of transformation. Their prescriptions and patterns of behavior have a double content that leads to voluntary adhesion in some cases, but also produces binding obligations in the form of laws, agreements and treaties (soft power). Furthermore, and not less important, these structures take the form of authoritative organizations with authoritative effectiveness, including via military power, as the United Nations Security Council (hard power).

Still following a suggestion from the school of regulation, we can say that the number of institutions of the international order is materialized in a network articulated with the web of the relations of production. The tissue that arises from this combination sets the mode of development of the world system, which corresponds to a regime of accumulation in a world scale, and its mode of regulation, in the form of its institutions (Lipietz 1988).

The different regimes that organize the world order give the specific materiality of each of these international institutions. They are composed of norms and organisms, of multilateral or interstate character, with coercive power and establishing standards for trade relations, financial circuits, investment flows, security, communications, migration, political freedoms and human rights, environmental protection, intellectual property, transportation, exploitation of natural resources, health, education, and humanitarian assistance, preservation of artistic and cultural heritage, etc. They establish goals and obligations of behaviors and actions for purposes that their values and beliefs define as desirable. On one hand the materialization of the ideas is realized and, on the other, these very ideas are shaped under the pressure of the material order.

The diagram in Figure 3 shows the relationship between the material and ideological levels and institutions. The two arrows are part of the trapezoid that represents the level of institutions, form the bridge or the cement that unites the other two levels representing the interconnection between these plans made by the institutional arrangement, which is why it is pointing in both directions. Institutions are the glue that holds together the material and ideological orders, the two blocks of our world-building. If the relationship between the two is bidirectional, with over determination among them is important to emphasize that – and here Robert Cox, following Marx, is right – that there is a first instance or a causal precedence in the construction of all social relations, and it comes from the material order.



Three points more to conclude. First, the hegemonic mode, as already mentioned, is one of the possible ways through which the international order can be organized, the same occurring within the national States that Gramsci analyzed. There are examples in history of multipolar balance, of systemic anarchy and chaos, or imperial orders. Second, the condition of global hegemony by a particular State and its ruling class can be exercised even when the leader is not able to control all the elements constitutive of this form of power. The continuity of American hegemony, an episode analyzed in a pioneer work by Conceição Tavares (1997), is such that, despite having lost the supremacy in some of the factors described herein, like power requirements for this type of leadership, the ability to use resources still available to the U.S. can preserve the American dominant position.

The third point concerns the possibility of making use of the concept of hegemony as developed here to explain this phenomenon that has developed intensively since the second half of the twentieth century, although it is a much earlier phenomenon in history: regional integration. The formation of blocks of national States can take place in the form of a structure hegemony. Or, perhaps, it can only exist as a hierarchical configuration of their actors with these characteristics. If we refer to the beginning of these notes, when discussing the implementation of the concept of hegemony in its original proposal, the analysis

of political domination within a State, for the interpretation of the international regime, we must answer “yes”, an arrangement of regional integration may, and probably will, be more successful in their stability, if it assumes an hegemonic form.

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ABSTRACT

The article details the concept of hegemony, with special attention to its historical evolution, and its present use in the study of International Relations.

KEYWORDS

Hegemony; International Relations; Gramsci.

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