

HEGEMONY IN THE 21 ST CENTURY

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Abstract:

The first quarter of the 21st century marks a period of developing parameters which will cause crucial changes in the years to come in the field of international relations and security. Global security environment is profoundly complicated in the midst of general chaos and instability. Following the end of the Cold War in 1989, the world has entered in a period of rapid change accelerated by globalisation. As the scope of the international power competition changes, the world is presently in a period of transformation manipulated by the US, a unique hegemonic power. This status quo is also maintained by the EU and other Western partners. The argument of this paper is to disclose mechanisms of contemporary hegemony including actors, processes, and instruments within the context of the evolution of hegemony and power relations in relation to theory as well as practice.

Key Words: Hegemony, United States, European Union, Power, State.

Introduction:

The term hegemony originating from ancient Greek ‘hegemonia’ literally expresses the dominant and oppressive status of one element in the system over the others. The concept of hegemony greatly contributes to a better understanding of current international relations and power relations. Hegemony is defined as dominant position having power capacity to change international rules and norms according to own motivations and desires. Imperialism is known as forceful extension of a nation’s authority by territorial conquest, establishing economic and political domination. In contradiction to imperialism, hegemony manipulates others with various mechanisms instead of a superior political structure (Heywood, 2007: 392).

In various eras of history either a unique hegemony has shaped the security environment in line with the events engendered by its projection of power or a number of similar power centers has appeared, and the competition and rivalry among them have determined the direction of historical developments. In the 21st century, the U.S. represents unique hegemonic power keeping the top position in the asymmetric power balance pyramid. However, frontiers of European Union, namely England, France and Germany, are also in cooperation to U.S. in hegemonic implications within the Western conceptual basis and practices. This paper aims to disclose the conceptual basis of hegemony and its instruments. To do so, sequences of the paper will follow; conceptual basis, security and power relations, mechanism of the hegemony emphasizing U.S. and EU parts.

Roots of Hegemony:

Antonio Gramsci has significantly contributed to the articulation of this concept suggesting that power is not only dependent on force but also on ‘consent’. According to Gramsci, hegemony represents the status of the most powerful country in the international system or the position of a dominant state in

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a specific region. For Gramsci hegemony entails ‘cooperation ensured by force’, combining social and political supervision, force and consent (Barrett, 1997: 239). Gramsci’s thoughts guided many scholars, who came after him. The hegemony of Gramsci used to advocate hidden or appropriated hegemony at the back side. A follower of Gramsci, the Canadian scholar Robert W.Cox utilized Gramsci’s study to criticize other theories of international relations.

According to Cox, theories like Realism and Neo-realism were coined to preserve the status quo serving the interests of rich dominant Western countries and their elite (Cox, 1981: 16-155). Those theories aimed to make the international order seem natural and unchangeable. Hegemony enabled the dominant state to spread its moral, political, and cultural values around the society and sub-communities. This was done through civilian society institutions. Civilian society consists of the net of institutions and practices that are partly autonomous from the state. Hegemony is to produce social and political systems that are to be applied on the nations targeted.

There are many ideas about the relationship between hegemony and imperialism. Imperialism is defined as enlarging the dominance of one nation over the other by way of open political and economical instruments (Heywood, 2007: 392). To explain the basic difference between the imperialism and hegemony Keohane says that as hegemony manipulates the relations with no superior body, imperial powers set their superiority with a senior political body (Keahone, 1991: 435-439). However imperialists have an approach for expansion by conquering new territory. Another scholar, Duncan Snidal separates hegemony into three; hegemony implied by conviction, kind but forceful hegemony, and colonialist hegemony based on force (Snidal, 1986: 579-614).

Discrimination between hegemony and dominance is another study subject argued by many scholars including Machiavelli, Gramsci, and Nye. According to those three intellectuals, a major power should not just rely on dominance, force, and hard power. Machiavelli advocates ‘respect’ as a source of obedience to a major power (Wright, 2004). Gramsci says that a major power itself evokes willingness and cooperation instinctively (Cox, 1993: 49-66). Nye believes that a superior power becomes a hegemonic power by persuading others to cooperate. Persuasion would be ensured by the utilization of soft power that makes other countries believe in common interests (Nye, 2002). However, according to hegemonic stability theory, major powers achieve their position unilaterally with the deployment of hard power but retaining consent and conviction (Keahone, 1984: 11).

In another definition, hegemony is the position of having the capability and power to change the rules and norms of international systems based on one’s own motivation and desire (Volgy, 2005: 1-2). If you don’t have enough power to affect global events in line with your own road map, that would be a dangerous illusion. Susan Strange envisages that hegemony requires two kinds of strength; relational, and structural based (Strange, 1989: 165). Relation based power is the strength to persuade and force the other actors one by one or in groups. Structural power is the essential capacity to realize the desired rules, norms, and operations in the international system. A hegemon creates or maintains critical regimes to

cooperate in the future, and reduces uncertainty while other states are in pursuit of their own interests.

Conceptual basis:

Initially, to analyze any international phenomenon like hegemony we firstly have to be aware of the conceptual basis which includes theories, concepts and models behind the complex of international relations discipline. Key pillars of those theories are power, structure and hegemony to explain the international environment and power relations (Baylis, Smith: 2005, 5). Therefore, any argument in regard to hegemony necessitates its relation with power relations and structural issues including means and instruments. Realism and Liberalism are primary theories of international relations to explain the hegemonic concept behind the Western thinking. However, modernism, post-modernism, and also globalization represents other essential conceptual components of contemporary hegemonic aspirations.

According to Realism, main actors of international system are (sovereign) states and international relations are seen as power competition between states to maximize their national interests (Ari, 1997: 256). So that the Realism suggests that international relations works with a mechanism called as “balance of power”. Another important paradigm, According to Liberalism, security also has economic, technological, and environmental dimensions. Liberalism suggests that international cooperation comes first prior to military options for the international dispute settlement. Liberalism adds new actors such as Multinational Corporations (MNCs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Organizations, and Transnational Organizations into the international arena by taking account interdependency and interaction in security environment. It also stresses the role of international law and regimes with agreed norms in international dispute settlement.

Another conceptual basis which enables us to understand international power relations is related to the traditional roots of Western culture; modern, modernization and modernism. Presently, modernism overlaps with Realism as a conceptual basis of hegemonic intervention and it underlies the conceptual basis of Western culture for the Third World Countries to penetrate into their structure (Alexander, 1995: 69-70). Hegemony and Modernism together brings about democracy, development, and cultural projects for transformation. On the other hand, the envisaged political, economical and socio-cultural transformation from the traditional to the modern for the Non-Western countries gives rise to current well-known missions in the security environment such as; nation-building, state-building, institution-building, and regime restoration (Kesselman, 1973: 139-154).

Post-modernists deny the supremacy of the nation-state, nationalism, sovereignty and national boundaries. They defend the individual basis questioning identity and power. According to the Post-modernist point of view, the state should share its authority with the private sector and civil community organizations (Gaudin, 2005: 22). EU represents a unique sample of post-modern structure (Cooper, 2005: 179). According to Post-modernists, the modern state represents traditional nation-state, sovereign, aggressive and the use traditional power for national interest.

To conclude analysis of the concept issue, we need to summarize the effects of globalization on national security. Globalization causes the limitation of national sovereignty and power policies by introducing new actors in the policy area (Yılmaz, 2006: 97-98). In weak states, it may also stimulate social and religious separatist activities and elicit questions of national unity and identity. Transparency of boundaries and information is another security problem. Eventually, nations should transform their structure and determine the new roles of the state in order to effectively to counter the negative effects of globalization.

Sources of Hegemony:

Sources of power have changed drastically in parallel with technological innovations over the centuries. Population was a great source of power in Europe's agricultural economies in the 17th and the 18th centuries because people were needed as taxpayers and as soldiers for land armies that comprised mainly mercenary soldiers. For this reason, France was in a dominant position in that period. However with the increasing importance of industrialization in the 19th century, England became dominant in the seas with a unique fleet and then Germany became superior thanks to the help of railroads (Nye, 2003: 5-7). In the middle of 20th century, the United States and the Soviet Union gained superior power status, each with the following factors; irresistible military capability, especially their nuclear arsenal, in addition to their industrial superiority and ideological framework.

As proposed in the Critical Theory presented by the Frankfurt School, there are three dimensions of power (Gill & Law, 1988: 73-74);

- 'Open power'; active power, openly applied to affect the attitude of another state in a desired way.

- 'Covert power'; more passive but organized, utilized in a vaguely way in order to make agenda of powerful side. Covert power is practiced by limiting political lines and leaving some issues out of an agenda.

- 'Structural power'; definite attraction and limitation systems with the physical and normative aspects to shape the relations of parties.

There has been general determinations in relation to the features of hegemonic power such as; effective currency unit in the international arena, a great military posture with the alliances and bases in every part of the world, leadership in regional crisis and conflicts, retaining nuclear arms, persuasion capacity over the other nations, legitimating of status by spreading own life standard and values culturally around the world (Uzgel, 2003: 31). Brzezinski claims that the troika of hegemony is money, production capacity, and military power (Brzezinski, 2004: 87). Susan Strange stresses that America ensures its hegemonic capacity through its own structural power enabled by security, production, finance, and knowledge capacity in international economy-politics exceeding regional dimensions (Strange, 1987: 565).

Furthermore Strange claims that structural power is dependent on four elements (Strange, 1987: 565). In international political economy, the nation which has those elements more than the others is the most powerful; (1) Maintaining the capability to influence the other states through threats, defense,

denial or escalation of violence. (2) Keeping in hand the control of goods and service production systems. (3) Holding the authority of determination and management possibilities in finance and credit institutions. (4) Retaining the most effective instruments to influence the knowledge and informatics either technically or religiously through acquiring, production, and communication.

The originator of term 'soft power' Joseph S. Nye lists the sources of hegemonic power as following (Nye, 2003: 30); (1) Technological leadership, (2) Supremacy in military and economy, (3) Soft power, (4) Control of the connection points of international communication lines. According to Nye, nations should develop these capacities in order to have soft power in the information age (Nye, 2003: 30); (1) Cultures and ideas that are close to global norms (like liberalism, pluralism, autonomy). (2) Global communication channels influence agendas. (3) Global prestige with own domestic and international performance.

A hegemonic power should have the best position in three dimensions; political, economic, and socio-cultural. Hegemony ensures global influence and control mechanisms with conceptual basis and practical actors and instruments. Hegemony also requires necessarily military power with a global reach and power projection. There are many studies about the various sources of power. Some argue that the followings as possible sources of hegemonic power (Uzgel, 2003: 31); (1) Money unit effective internationally. (2) Bases and allies in all regions of the world. (3) Leadership in regional crisis and conflicts. (3) Nuclear capability. (4) Persuasion power over the others. (5) Spreading its life-style and values to the whole world to legitimate own position.

Hegemony and Power Relations:

According to behavioral science, power is the ability to change others' attitude in order to have the desired results. Power is the influence applied by one nation or nations' group to others in order to force the opponent to do something, normally refused for the international relations discipline. There are two sources of authority; power and legitimation. Conceptual basis provides the necessary framework to legitimate power use. Therefore, legitimation stimulates the nations to do what you want behind the bright terms such as democracy, development or dialogue. That also forms the basis of soft power originated by the Joseph S. Nye (Nye, 2004: 256).

We may categorize the power actors under five layers from top to down. Buzan identifies first three; Super power, Major (great) power, Regional power (Buzan, Waever, 2003: 394). However, we have to add two others to complete the power pyramid; Sub-regional power, and Powerless power at the bottom. A super power has broad-spectrum capabilities (political, economic, cultural, and military) with a global reach and is an active player in the securitization and desecuritization of all regions whether as threats, guarantors, allies or interveners in the international system and defends own values as universal. A great power does not have large capabilities in all sectors and is not actively present in the securitization process of some regions. It is responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations.

A regional power normally has large capabilities in various regions but not in broad-spectrum. It is influenced by higher-level powers and excluded from the

higher-level calculations. Hegemony or power relations aim to limit the others' power utilization. Therefore, the nations are generally in process to degrade in the power pyramid toward the powerless power layer at the bottom. Sub-regional powers are the countries that have a power capacity in regional level but dependent to consent of major players. For instance, Iran represents a regional power while the Turkey as sub-regional power based on the criteria of power use dependency. Powerless powers are the nations and groups who has no ability to power use externally or internally and dependent to powerful others.

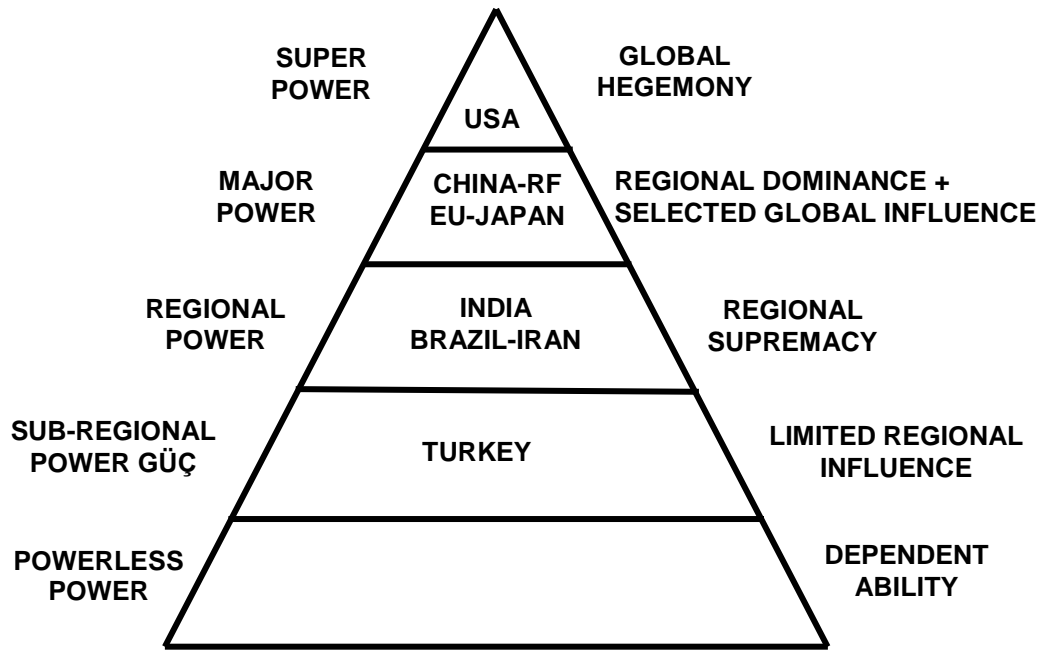


Figure 1: Power Pyramid in the 21 st Century (Yılmaz, 2007: 16-17)

The history of hegemony goes hundred years back. England was the first hegemonic country beginning from 15th century. U.S. has taken over the hegemonic position in 1945. At the current power balance pyramid in the world; (Figure 1) the only super power, U.S., also represents hegemony with global influence capacity in all dimensions. Major Powers are listed as China, Russia Federation, EU frontiers (Germany, France, and England), and Japan (Brzezinski, 2004: 279). The nations mostly on the way of deep layers of pyramid to the extent of their dependency to hegemonic powers. Sensitivity of nation-states sourced by the globalization reflections make them target country to be transformed as failed states or fragile states into pro-Western nation through regime restoration or nation-building. Therefore, hegemony aims to limit and prevent the power utilizations of the nations states.

The Mechanism of the Hegemony:

Hegemony in the 21 st century aims at ensuring influence and control over the nations states and its power use by ‘Web strategy’ using internal and external webs. Internal web creates a parallel sovereignty layer between the people and government using connecting actors such as media, civil community organizations. External web forms an external pressure layer using transnational

institutions like IMF, WB, UN, EU etc. On the other hand, methods and actors of foreign policy have changed to penetrate into nations with web strategy. There are four types of web within the western mechanism;

- Political web through democracy projects,
- Economical web through development projects,
- Cultural web through dialogue projects, and
- Military web supplementary for coercive methods and nation-building operations.

In parallel to the web strategies, the scope of foreign interventions and the international power competition have changed. Foreign policies are executed in the form of unofficial, prevalent, and unnamed conflicts with special and proxy wars, covert operations, and propaganda struggles based on global intelligence networks. The new foreign policy methods include coercive diplomacy, shaping the security environment, control strategy, open society strategy, economical methods (external aids, capital and financial ploys, foreign debt trap), disinformation, military ways, low intensity war, terrorism, guerilla war, subversive activities, regime restoration, and nation-building (Yilmaz, 2006: 120). The non-state actors of foreign policy implementations have also diversified drastically including governmental organizations, NGOs, MNCs, foundations, illegal criminal orgs (Mafia), terrorist organizations, media, universities, civil society organizations, influence agents etc.

The pillars of the Western Hegemony:

The hegemony mechanisms of the U.S. and EU are to be better understandable with their geopolitical approaches guiding their power policies; the modern and post-modern geopolitics. United States applies modern geopolitics with the following features; state-based, hard power centered, national interest driven, targeting the countries defined as rouge or failed states, diversify the others as goods and bads, focus on democracy promotion, and use of coercion profoundly. EU is in the course of post-modern geopolitics (Falk, 2005: 44). EU prefers multinational intervention, soft power centered, compliance with the international law and regimes, Europe focused, targeting the selected fragile states, define also gray countries or regions, conceptually claim good governance and use primarily diplomacy as method.

The U.S.A. is the unique super state able to make all types of interventions into all regions of the world. After disintegration of Soviet Union, unipolarity of the world system had two basic consequences: American hegemonic power became uncontrollable and unlimited; and the nation-states felt free to pursue the policies in favor of their own national interests (Bilbilik, 2003: 22). However, in a short time, it was understood that the nations were unable to implement national foreign policies outside the control of the U.S.A. With this historical transformation of balance of power, the U.S.A. seized the historical opportunity of shaping the new world order according to its interests with no waste of time.

Conceptual framework of U.S. hegemony contains Realism and Modernism in connection with the projects in political, economical, and cultural

dimensions; Democracy, Development and Dialogue. American hegemony is applied in two ways; (1) Regime restoration with soft power (Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan etc). (2) Nation-building with hard power (Afghanistan, Iraq). Nation building implies to reforms in government, regimes, state structure, and social order in pursuit of setting up Pro-American order. It may start following a military operation, or as a last stage of low intensity operations or within the democracy and development projects. U.S. military posture with soft power instruments provides great advantage for power use with a global reach. Four webs within the U.S. hegemony mechanism are supported by the European Union and other westerners such as Japan, Australia etc.

As politic web, democracy represents the conceptual basis using the democratization infrastructure. US system integrates all available institutions in the democratization process including multinational corporations, universities, think-tank centers (Melia, 2005: 2-17). But the NED and USAID are the primary organs exporting democracy to selected nations and regions. Development projects forms the basis of economic Web and utilize IMF, WB, and WTO as the external instruments of web. Cultural web using the dialog projects as conceptual basis is directed by the U.S. public diplomacy offices in cooperation with U.N., media, and church. Military web constitutes the hard power side of hegemony to enforce the failed states and launch the nation building operations when necessary.

The EU side of the hegemony envisages particularly soft power implementations. According to Olli Rhen, representative for enlargement, EU soft power instruments are followings (Rhen, 2007: 178-183); (1) Money for development and aid programs. (2) Trade policy that makes 1/5 of the world trade. (3) Diplomacy through CFSP² and High Representative. (4) Military as increasing civilian capacity. (5) Civil missions for democratization, rule of law, human rights, election monitoring, education and (6) EU capabilities to ensure justice, freedom, and security; and partnership policies. EU interventions primarily utilize the “sticks and carrots” strategy; mix of political and economic instruments (Ash, 2006). If carrots don’t work, the democratic and humanitarian face of EU changes and is replaced by cancellation of economic aid, political isolation, coercive methods, and gradual military escalation.

EU strategy consists of partnership, persuasion and local penetration techniques. EU selects alternative penetration points for non-state actors to penetrate into region and fragile states (SC/HR, 2001). EU forces its democracy vision in four ways (CFSS, 2005: 2-3): (1) Copenhagen Criteria for candidates of EU full membership. (2) ENP: European Neighborhood Policy for Former Soviet Union Nations. (3) SAP: The Stabilization and Association Agreement Process for Western Balkans. (4) EMP: Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for Mediterranean Countries. EU uses four fundamental actors in democratization; Commission, Parliament, Council, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. EIDHR (European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights) Initiative provides budget for democracy projects (Joffe, 2001: 1).

² CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy.

In conclusion, the world is in an evolving period manipulated by the Western hegemony represented by the U.S.A. and EU as its complementary to reach a civilization ruled by Western values and serves for their interests. The U.S.A. is the unique super state able to make all types of interventions into all regions of the world. It is not certain that rising powers will become rivals for the U.S.A. The world is in a period of transformation in course of modernization and democratization aiming at national power by influencing state sovereignty and identity. At the first quarter of the 21 st century, nation-states are in danger to lose their power capacity and power implementation instruments. For that reason, they should develop their concepts, actors and instruments to struggle with any hegemonic polar to maintain and ensure their survivability and own way.

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