

**Compare and contrast two different theoretical approaches to the question of hegemony (e.g. HST, soft power, Gramscian hegemony, structural power or imperialism). What are their main similarities and differences?**

**Word Count – 2,467**

The essay will draw parallels between aspects of Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) and neo-Gramscian analysis of hegemony - whilst illustrating the more complex dialectical approach of the latter - with particular reference to United States (US) hegemony. Firstly, HST will be outlined, especially its main two perspectives: the collective goods and the security approach. Following, will be an analysis of neo-Gramscianism, considering the influence Gramsci had alongside a focus on Robert Cox, who pioneered the adaptation of Gramscian analysis to international relations. The similarities and differences between the two approaches, specifically their conception of the state and society, institutional analysis and the importance of self-interest, will be critically compared and contrasted. Lastly, the essay will detail how the neo-Gramscian conception of hegemony can aid the structure-agency debate and improve the coherence and depth of HST, especially its analysis of the rise and fall of US hegemony.

Classical realism, neorealism, liberalism and neoliberal institutionalists all influence HST (Özçelik 2005:93), which makes comparison of HST and neo-Gramscianism more complex. Traditionally, for HST, “order in world politics is typically created by a single dominant power and secondly, the maintenance of order requires continued hegemony;” based upon the hegemon's economic and military capabilities/power (Bozdağlıoğlu 2009:6) and the distribution of such power amongst states (Webb and Krasner 1989:183). However, within HST, Krasner (1976, cited in Karns and Mingst 2010:48) - amongst others - challenge the view that the system needs only one hegemon (also see, Lake 1993: 464-465). Gilpin and Gilpin (2001:94) also emphasise that HST argue a hegemon needs to adopt and care about liberal economic principles for a stable international liberal system to occur.

HST can be categorised into two main variants. The collective goods approach “assumes that all countries would benefit from international economic liberalization and stability”, and only through a hegemon can such collective goods be provided due to “institutional and strategic, in the game theoretic sense, obstacles” (Webb and Krasner 1989:184). The security approach, however, disagrees; arguing that if relative gains pose a danger to powerful states' security, such liberalization will be undermined “even though those states could have increased their absolute welfare by participating in a more open system” (Webb and Krasner 1989:184). Hasenclever *et al* (1997:92)

argues that these are two extremes ('ideals') of a continuum.

Kindleberger's work, shaped by liberal and realist theory (Guzzini 1998:153), has been especially influential on the collective, public goods version, with Kindleberger arguing the extent and duration of the Great Depression was due to Britain's inability and US's unwillingness to provide hegemonic leadership and associated public goods during the inter-war period (Rapkin 1990:6). Kindleberger describes the hegemon as "an enlightened leader" for the long-term development "of a well-ordered and mutually beneficial international system" (Ikenberry 1989:379), with the key international public good the hegemon provides being a stable international liberal economy (Guzzini 1998:144). For this, the hegemon needs to ensure a number of things, including; liquidity in crises, macroeconomic policy coordination and stable world trade (Guzzini 1998:144-145).

The security version focuses on the hegemon ensuring different public goods – namely, peace, security and international order (Bozdağlıoğlu 2009:6; Guzzini 1998:145). Thus, a hegemon will provide an international liberal economy if it does not undermine its own security and interests (Webb and Kranser 1989:184). Classical realism and neorealism predominantly informs the security version (Özçelîk 2005:91-92). There is a key difference between classical realism, neorealism and HST regarding their view on the balance of power, however; with classical realism advocating an equal balance of power, neorealism accepting this but preferring bipolar rather than multipolar systems as more successful balances of power, whereas HST, generally, emphasises one, dominant hegemon to maintain the international system's stability (Copeland 2000:2). However, Bozdağlıoğlu (2009:9) argues that empirically HST faces problems with its position on the balance of power, given the Cold War took place in a bipolar, not a unipolar, system.

Problem-solving theory, like HST, accepts the status quo due to its fixed, ahistorical understanding, whereas critical theory, like neo-Gramscianism, considers the potential for change (Cox's 1981:129-130). Problem-solving and critical theory are not mutually exclusive, however (Cox 2010). Robert Cox's work has been the most influential in shaping neo-Gramscianism, with Cox (1983) applying Antonio Gramsci's critical theory on the possibilities of alternative forms of society and state, especially the concept of hegemony and the importance of ideas and consent, to international relations (p.162-164).

Augelli and Murphy (1993) outline Gramsci's two 'ideal' types of supremacy: domination – rule without consent; and, ethical hegemony - "intellectual and moral leadership" (p.127-128).

Domination does not always involve force, as consent based on non-ethical deception is domination, not hegemony (p.128). Thus, Gramsci is critical of the separation of these two forms of rule; a separation found in HST (p.128). Gramsci constructed three levels of society: the economic structure; civil society; and, political society - where the two forms of rule operate, illustrating a more complex view of force and consent than HST (p.128). Civil society is where “ideological struggle, the activities of intellectuals, and the construction of hegemony (whether 'ethical' or based on fraud)” occurs (p.129). Political society refers to political institutions and legal affairs, but Gramsci differed between 'political society'/'state power' and “state in the organic, wider sense” that refers to the “overall 'structure of the superstructure' [civil society and political society]” (p.129). Crucially, as Cox (1983) outlines, for Gramsci a strong civil society and related hegemony requires a war of position, gradually developing the “social foundations of a new state” (p.165).

HST does not critically consider the effect society has on states' interests, with interests viewed as forming before social interaction (Clark 2011:16). HST is a state-based theory (Guzzini 1998:153), viewing states as “rational, unitary actors” (Lake 1993:461). For neo-Gramscianism however, there is a clear connection between the state and civil society (Cox 1983:164), with emphasis placed upon the interdependent relationship between the structure (economic relations) and the superstructure (ethical-political, ideological sphere) (Cox 1981:126-135). Thus, Gramsci has an “extended” conception of the state (Gill and Law 1993:93), as “the state is a characteristic of society constituted by the articulation of political and civil society” (Augelli and Murphy 1993:129). The concept of a historic bloc refers to the importance of a strong relationship between the state and society (Cox 1983:167). A hegemonic historic bloc needs a hegemonic social class to ensure and reproduce universal culture, social relations and institutional arrangements; a new bloc only forms when a subordinate class is able to dominant yet incorporate other subordinate groups, with considerable dialogue occurring between these groups and intellectuals, especially organic intellectuals (Cox 1983:167-169).

This helps analyse US's hegemonic development since the Second World War, as an integrated hegemonic historic bloc at a national level has implications for the international arena, as Cox (1983) argues world hegemony “in its beginnings [is] an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class” (p.171) - with passive revolutions through such hegemony occurring in peripheral countries. By passive revolution, Gramsci refers to the conflict between revolutionary and restorative forces in society, where through Caesarism a strong person intervenes to resolve the stalemate, either reactionary - where the status quo is

stabilised - or progressively, with a new state developing; furthermore, *transformismo* relates to the co-option of potential leaders in passive revolutions (p.166). Cox states that social forces need to focus on changing national societies through a war of position, with ongoing crisis since the 1960s/70s providing chance for counter-hegemony (p.174). Thus, neo-Gramscianism illustrates the importance of understanding societal and domestic factors and their relation with hegemony (p.171); but for HST, domestic and international relations' relationship is of minor interest (Cafruny 1990:105).

HST is weaker in theorising institutions compared to neo-Gramscianism. Related is Keohane's (1984, cited in Karns and Mingst 2010:49) neoliberal institutionalist analysis of how a declining hegemon can be saved through regimes created by that hegemon, ensuring ongoing international cooperation - thus, criticising HST's argument that without a hegemon the international system's stability would decline. International regimes refers to rules and formal international organisations (Gilpin and Gilpin 2001:83). Despite Keohane's broader theory of hegemony, Keohane still utilises a materialist definition of hegemony like HST (Clark 2011:20). Furthermore, regime theory was a response to the apparent decline of US hegemony in the 1970/80s and thus is viewed as a self-interested way of demonstrating that the liberal international order would survive (Gilpin and Gilpin 2001: 84-85). HST is also considered as suffering from Anglo-American bias (Cafruny 1990:99).

Nevertheless, neo-Gramscianism has influenced neoliberal institutionalists (Karns and Mingst 2010:53). Cox (1983) refers to how international organisations are key to world hegemony through the construction of legitimate universal norms, alongside undermining and co-opting elites from periphery countries and counter-hegemonic forces (p.172). Cox (1981), like Keohane, sees institutions as able to take on a life of their own, alongside helping ensure hegemony (p.135-137). However, neo-Gramscianism has a broader analysis of how institutional/regime analysis fits into a theory of hegemonic power. Cafruny (1990) argues that Keohane does not consider how co-operation often obscures underlying conflict, such as the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment programmes (p.100). This relates to neo-Gramscian analysis regarding the creation of universal interests through the co-option of subordinate social forces, alongside processes involved in passive revolutions. However, like Keohane, regimes for neo-Gramscianism are the product of international power structures (Cafruny 1990:116); nevertheless, neoliberal institutionalism is a problem solving-theory unlike neo-Gramscianism (Cox 1992:173).

In terms of public goods, the collective goods version of HST argues that smaller states benefit more than (and thus, exploit) the hegemon, despite the hegemon gaining considerably from the international system (Bozdağlıoğlu 2009:5). Here, the leader is seen as benevolent (Lake 1993:467). The security version of HST focuses on the self-interest of the hegemon and their use of coercion towards other states to obtain their acceptance of the hegemon's desired international order, with other states contributing to the dominant state for providing public goods (Bozdağlıoğlu 2009:6). Furthermore, as mentioned, they disagree there is a common interest in international liberalisation and stability (Guzzini 1998:145). Here, the leader is coercive (Lake 1993:467). The security variation of HST is similar to neo-Gramscianism in that they both share the belief that there is no common interest in the international liberal order, nor does it benefit everyone equally. However, unlike HST, neo-Gramscianism has a more complex analysis regarding the formation of interests; not just conceptualising interests as being based on material and resource capabilities.

Interestingly, however, neo-Gramscianism and both variants of HST have the concept of self-interest central to their perspective of hegemony. For instance, Cox (1983) refers to how the creation of a historic bloc and consequentially hegemony involves the movement from particular class/group interests to the creation of institutions and ideologies that, if they become hegemonic, appear universal; with subordinate groups having some of their interests met, whilst not threatening the interests of the hegemonic class (168-169). Whereas, the collective version of HST emphasise states' acceptance of a hegemon in order to ensure self-interested universal public goods that benefit all. For both, hegemony is "based in the 'consent' of the ruled (and hence in voluntary compliance), but in which this consent derives purely from self-interest and benefit" (Clark 2011:21). The security version of HST focuses on the hegemon only providing - often through coercion - public goods, namely security, if it is in their self-interest. However, the consideration of other factors - such as the quality of leadership, morality and intellectuality - within neo-Gramscianism ensures a broader consideration of hegemony aside from self-interest (Clark 2011:22).

Arguably, neo-Gramscianism is more equipped to address the structure-agency problem and debate (Gill and Law 1993:94) and its relationship with US hegemony. Cox's (1981:135-138) 'historical structures' concept relates. Historical structures do not determine people's action but set the context, with people able to transform such context through rival structures. Cox outlines three interrelated forces in the structure: material capabilities, ideas and institutions. In terms of ideas, there are two types: inter-subjective meanings that are shared, historically defined views of social relations - creating habits and exceptions; and secondly, different groups' collective views of the social order -

where the potential for transition in the historical structure, due to the conflict of these collective views, resides. Institutions help maintain, stabilise and reinforce order and are constituted by material capabilities and ideas but also help influence these. Historical structure methodology can be applied to three interrelated levels of activity: organisation of production (processes, transnational/national social forces); forms of states; and, world orders.

For instance, rather than equating the US leaving the Gold Standard with US hegemonic decline, like HST does, it could be viewed as US adaptation to structural changes (Guzzini 1998:151). HST ignores the inherent destabilising mechanisms and processes that were within the Bretton Woods System, especially US domestic pressures and unsustainable expenditure (such as through the Vietnam War) and the associated 'Triffin Dilemma', alongside the rise of Eurodollars and private lobbying for the liberalisation of finance (Underhill 2005:109-110). In terms of historical structures, international production has risen, creating new social forces, with the development of a global class structure - a transnational management class - central to institutions such as the IMF; relating to the internationalisation of the state and rise of neoliberal ideology and world order (Cox 1981:144-151).

Therefore, unlike neo-Gramscianism, theoretically HST does not analyse the mechanisms and processes involved in hegemonic power (Ikenberry 1989: 379), thus, also having a limited consideration of the rise of a hegemon (Özcelik 2005:94). Ikenberry (1989), for instance, shows that despite the US's military and economic power it did not get exactly what it wanted through the construction of the Bretton Woods System; the US compromised its desired liberal multilateral system for Europe's preferred Embedded Liberalism (p.375-377). Thus, Europe had a lot more power and influence in constructing the Bretton Woods System than HST recognises, which neo-Gramscianism – through analysing hegemonic compromises, including materially, ideologically and institutionally, to ensure consensual long-term rule and achievement of a hegemon's goals - considers (Cox 1983:172).

In conclusion, neo-Gramscianism has various similarities with competing versions of HST's analysis of consent, force, institutions and conceptions of public goods relating to hegemony. Nevertheless, neo-Gramscianism has a more complex, holistic critical conception of the state and society, alongside considering a range of actors involved in the construction of a hegemonic system and the links between domestic and international spheres of activity. Whilst both HST and neo-Gramscianism have the conception of self-interest central to their analysis of hegemonic power,

HST's view of self-interest is narrower and based on material and military resources/capabilities of states. Neo-Gramscianism, especially Cox's work on historical structures, can assist with a dialectical consideration of structure and agency where institutions, material factors and ideas/ideology are considered when analysing US hegemony. Therefore, rather than the HST's Anglo-American problem-solving approach, neo-Gramscian analysis of hegemony assists with a complex, critical analysis of US hegemony and the potential for structural transformation.

### **Bibliography**

Augelli, E., and Murphy, C.N. (1993). "Gramsci and international relations: a general perspective with examples from recent US policy toward the Third World". In: S. Gill, (ed). *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bozdağlıoğlu, Y. (2009). *Hegemonic (In)Stability and the Limits of US Hegemony* [online]. [Accessed 10th March 2013]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.dagarcikturkiye.com/dosyalar/dosyayonetici/dosya/24052011170243.pdf>>.

Cafruny, A.W. (1990). "A Gramscian Concept of Declining Hegemony: Stages of US Power and the Evolution of International Economic Relations". In: D. P. Rapkin, (ed). *World Leadership and Hegemony: International Political Economy Yearbook, Vol. 5*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Clark, I. (2011). *Hegemony in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Copeland, D.C. (2000). *The Origins of Major War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cox, R.W. (1981). "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory". *Journal of International Studies*. **10**(2) 126-155.

Cox, R.W. (1983). "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method". *Journal of International Studies*. **12**(2) 162-175.

Cox, R.W. (1992). "Multilateralism and World Order". *Review of International Studies*. **18**(2) 161-180.

Cox, R.W. (2010). *Theory Talk #37: Robert Cox* [online]. [Accessed 12th March 2013]. Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.theory-talks.org/2010/03/theory-talk-37.html>>.

- Gill, S., and Law, D. (1993). "Global hegemony and the structural power of capital". In: S. Gill, (ed). *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilpin, R., and Gilpin, J. M. (2001). *Global Political Economy: Understanding The International Economic Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Guzzini, S. (1998). *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*. London: Routledge.
- Hasenclever, A., Mayer, P., and Rittberger, V. (1997). *Theories of International Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ikenberry, G.J. (1989). "Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony". *Political Science Quarterly*. **104**(3) 375-400.
- Karns, M.P., and Mingst, K.A. (2010). *International Organizations: The Politics and Processes of Global Governance*. Second Edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Lake, D.A. (1993). "Leadership, Hegemony, and the International Economy: Naked Emperor or Tattered Monarch with Potential". *International Studies Quarterly*. **37**(4) 459-489.
- Özçelîk, S. (2005). "Neorealist and Neo-Gramscian Hegemony in International Relations and Conflict Resolution During the 1990's". *Ekonomik ve Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi*. **1** 88-114.
- Rapkin, D. P. (1990). "The Contested Concept of Hegemony". In: D. P. Rapkin, (ed). *World Leadership and Hegemony: International Political Economy Yearbook, Vol. 5*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Underhill, G.R.D. (2005). "Introduction: Global Issues in Historical Perspective". In: R. Stubbs., and G.R.D. Underhill, (eds). *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*. Third Edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Webb, M. C., and Krasner, S. D. (1989). "Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment". *Review of International Studies*. **15**(2) 183-198.