

# The U.S. Hegemonic Model during the Cold War

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the question about the nature of the US hegemony in the international system during the Cold War. In this paper I will analyze the US hegemonic model during the Cold War, by arguing that the United States promoted and exerted an inclusive hegemony. As theoretical basis for hegemony I will use a mix of theories on hegemony (Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci) and new institutional economics (Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson).*

**Keywords:** *Extractive hegemony, hegemony, hegemonic model, inclusive hegemony, United States*

## Introduction

After the Second World War, the United States of America emerged victorious, with a strong military and with the most developed economy in the world, capable to finance anti-communist projects<sup>1</sup> and to allocate a high amount of financial resources for the reconstruction of a ruined Europe<sup>2</sup>. After the end of the war, the United States had to take the responsibility as the leader of the capitalist world, especially when the Soviet Union, the leader of the so called Communist world, emerged as the main ideological, military and economic competitor. In this article I see the Cold War as a confrontation between two hege-

monic models, from both political and economic perspectives, but, due to space limitations, in this paper I will discuss only the American hegemonic model.

The aim of this article is to offer an insight to the hegemonic model promoted by the United States during the Cold War, more exactly between 1945 and 1991<sup>3</sup>. Given the two

opposing hegemonic models during the Cold War – American and Soviet – what was the nature of the American hegemonic model during the Cold War? This is the main question that I aim to answer in this paper. Secondary, how was the nature of the American hegemonic model from the political point of view? But from the economic point of view? In my analysis, I will make use of a mixed theoretical model, by combining the perspective of hegemony in international relations with New Institutional Economics (NIE). More exactly, for hegemony, I will use a mixed definition, from Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci, while for NIE I base on the perspective of inclusive/extractive political/economic institutions, developed by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. Therefore, I argue that the American hegemonic model during the Cold War was based on an inclusive perspective.

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More exactly, from taking into consideration the political and economic international institutions promoted by the United States during the Cold War, the American hegemonic model (or simply put hegemony) was inclusive.

From a methodological point of view, I will base on a methodological grid designed to analyze the American Cold War hegemonic model, that will be presented in detailed in the second part of the paper. The study is mainly qualitative, based on a case study for the American Cold War hegemonic model. I also use the documents analysis method and content analysis as research instrument. For data collection necessary for the case study, I will use mainly secondary historical sources. As for the theory, I will use a combined theoretical model, composed of the concept of hegemony in international relations and Institutional Economics. I will use the perspectives of Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci for hegemony, and the perspective of Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson for NIE – inclusive/extractive political/economic institutions. I will devise a theoretical framework based on these two theoretical perspectives (hegemony and NIE) after the review the theoretical part. Beside the analysis of the American hegemonic model, I consider that the combined theoretical framework represents another relevant contribution to the IR realm.

The article is separated in the following parts. The first part is reserved for the discussing of the theoretical perspectives regarding hegemony and new institutional economics. The second part is reserved for presenting a theoretical framework devoted to the analysis of the American Cold War hegemonic model. The fourth part is devoted to the analysis of the US hegemonic model during the Cold War.

## **Hegemony and New Institutional Economics**

The role of this section of my article is to present the theoretical basis which will be used in this paper. Therefore, a short review on the theories of hegemony (hegemonic stability theory) and NIE will be presented, with accent on the main theoretical perspectives that will be used the essay. I will adopt the perspectives of Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci for the definition of hegemony and of Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson for NIE, which will be combined with a functional definition of hegemony for this study.

## **Theories on Hegemony. Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci**

In order to determine a functional definition for hegemony that will be used for this study, I will make a short review on the two theoretical perspectives that will be used in the paper, Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci. Given the space requirements, I will discuss only these two perspectives<sup>4</sup>.

By trying to explain the systemic change, Robert Gilpin, as a representative of the hegemonic stability theory (HST)<sup>5</sup>, argued that the world development in economy and technology determine shifts in the states' interests and their equilibrium in terms of power. The new de facto configuration determines the will of changing the international system by some states that consider to be favored by a new systemic configuration (Gilpin: 1981, 9). The new configuration establishes “whose interests are being served by the functioning of the system” (Ibid.: 10). Hegemony in the international system occurs when “a single powerful state controls or dominates the lesser states in the system” (Ibid.: 29). A “systemic change involves a

change in the governance of an international system”, representing an internal change in the system, with modifications “in the international distribution of power, the hierarchy of prestige, and the rules and rights embodied in the system”. Systemic change is about the ascension and fall of the hegemon or empires to/from international governance (Ibid.: 42). The “driving force of international relations” resides in the states’ uneven increase in power between them, which result in a hegemonic war (Gilpin: 1988, 591), that threatens to determine a systemic change (Ibid.: 592).

The system needs more than a hegemon “to ensure the development of a liberal international economy”, which also “must be committed to the values of liberalism” (Gilpin and Gilpin: 1987, 72; 2001, 94), in order to guarantee a liberal international economy (Gilpin and Gilpin: 2001, 94).

In the Marxist approach, the origins of the concept of hegemony come from V. I. Lenin, who first viewed it as a strategy for the proletariat to win the hearts of the majority for the revolution (Simon: 1999, 25), related to class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat (Lenin: 1905, 79), affirming that “[f]rom proletarian point of view hegemony in a war goes to him who fights most energetically” (Ibid.).

For Gramsci, in contrast with Lenin, is regarded as hegemony versus dictatorship of the proletariat (Cox: 1993, 50). If hegemony was only a strategy for Lenin, Antonio Gramsci turns it into a concept, separating between domination/coercion and intellectual and moral leadership (Simon: 1999, 25). According to Gramsci:

„A social group can, indeed must, already exercise ‘leadership’ before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to ‘lead’ as well” (Gramsci, apud. Simon: 1999, 25).

Gramscian view on hegemony rests in the completion of force by ideas<sup>6</sup> (Bates: 1975, 351) and in the interconnection between classes and other social forces that are designed to win the state power (Simon: 1999, 26). Once the other classes consent to the new leadership, a certain class, or a fraction of it, becomes hegemonic (Ibid.). For Gramsci, “[t]he proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the population against capitalism and the bourgeois state” (Gramsci, apud. Simon: 1999, 26), combining its interests with those of other classes (Simon: 1999, 26)<sup>7</sup>.

After presented the perspectives of Robert Gilpin and Antonio Gramsci, I consider that a Gilpinian style definition of hegemony, based on pure and hard power, it is not enough. Therefore, I argue that Gilpin’s understanding on hegemony needs to be completed by a component that takes into consideration the ideas, in the sense that the hegemon has to promote an attractive ideology in order to exert its hegemonic position in the international system. I will come back later to this matter, in the next section.

## **New Institutional Economics. Inclusive and Extractive Institutions**

This part is reserved for a short presentation of inclusive and extractive political and economic institutions. Due to space consideration, only the perspective of Acemoglu and Robinson (henceforth AR) will be presented<sup>8</sup>. The role of NIE in this paper is to combine the perspective of AR on institutions with the definition on hegemony that I have provided in the precedent part. AR argue that states developed four sets of institutions that determine the economic outcome of a state and also the political landscape (Dec. 2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2016). In order to explain the economic performance and the nature of a political regime, AR envisaged a set of concepts that relate to institutions: inclusive/extractive economic institutions and inclusive/extractive political institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson: 2012), while the economic success is determined by the institutional configuration of the states (Ibid.: 2012, 57).

Within the framework provided by the inclusive economic institutions, the great mass of people can participate to economic life, according to their talent or abilities, allowing them to choose their careers, giving birth to new enterprises. Private property is guaranteed, together with fair laws and a public system which is the framework for exchanges and contracts. Inclusive economic institutions back the increases in productivity and economy (Ibid.: 58). Extractive economic institutions are the opposite of the inclusive. Private property is not guaranteed, while the great mass of the people is not economically independent, because of high coercion. The state power does not aim to provide public services favorable to prosperity and the laws are one-sided. There are built to extract the wealth and revenues from the great mass in the benefit of the few (Ibid.: 59).

The political institutions represent a hallmark that determine the way of electing politicians and what are allowed to do and influence the distribution and usage of power in a society (Ibid.: 61). They are absolutist (extractive) when the power distribution is limited and unconstrained. They favor those who are in power and allow them to design extractive institution to consolidate their position and extract revenues from the great mass (Ibid.). The pluralist (inclusive) political institutions, as opposite to absolutist, constrain the power and are backed by a large coalition or in many groups and is not held by a single individual or a small group (Ibid.).

## **Towards a Theoretical Framework for Analysis of the American Hegemony during the Cold War**

In order to proceed to the analysis, a functional definition for hegemony is needed. After examining the most important perspectives on hegemony, I consider that a mixed definition of hegemony is more appropriate. I argue that hegemony is not only about hard power, that come from military might and other capabilities such as economy or population, but it has also a component based on the ideology (system of ideas) promoted by the hegemon, ideology that is shared by the most actors in the international system, especially those from the rank two powers, that are below the hegemon. Therefore, for defining hegemony, I combine the perspectives of Robert Gilpin (for hard power) and Antonio Gramsci (for the export of ideology). The functional definition for hegemony rests in a combination of hard power for domination

of the weaker states and an exported ideology, that has a degree of attractivity for other states (especially from the rank 2), by combining the most actors' interests to create a system of alliances that sustain the position of the hegemon.

After I have clarified the meaning of hegemony which will be used in this paper, the clarification of what means hegemonic model is needed. The hegemonic model comes from the nature of the hegemony exerted by the hegemon (global or regional) or by the candidate to hegemony. I consider that the hegemonic model consists more on the ideology (in political and economic terms) that is promoted by the hegemon, which is a state that has the hard power to back its ideas and protect its interests. Taking into account the NIE perspective of AR, I differentiate the hegemonic model into *inclusive* and *extractive* (inclusive/extractive hegemony to be shorter). I will develop on these concepts in the rows below.

Regarding the institutions promoted by the hegemon (USA in this case) on the international arena, I will make use of two concepts, inspired from AR perspective, namely inclusive hegemony and extractive hegemony<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the inclusive/extractive dichotomy is used by AR for explaining internal political and economic phenomena, but I argue that these concepts can be used to explain international relations, combined in this case with the definition on hegemony stated above. At the international level, the inclusive institutions (political and economic) are determined by the distribution of the benefits not only for the hegemon (who takes the greatest advantage, given its primacy position), but also to the most states from the international system, including the bulk of the rank two great powers. Combined with the definition on hegemony, inclusive hegemony means that the hegemonic model is designed to distribute the benefits between the hegemon and the most states in the system. In the case of extractive hegemony, the hegemonic model is designed exclusively in the advantage of the hegemon, on the great expense of the most states that enter under hegemonic domination, which are excluded from the benefits or are exploited.

In order to cover both the political and economic aspects, the analysis is centered on legitimacy as a political institution, while international free trade is reserved the economic aspect. At the internal level, legitimacy is understood as the people's perception that the government (or leadership) is fair (Roskin et al.: 2011, 24). On the international arena, I understand legitimacy as the perception of the other states that the leadership of the hegemon is fair. Free trade represents a complex relation that permits the free movement of goods, based on an efficient pattern, that ensures greater economic performance (Gilpin and Gilpin: 2001, 198). If the meaning of legitimacy and trade represents the case for private entities (individuals or companies) at the internal level, at the international level, the referent objects will be the states and the international institutions advanced by them. To be clearer about the meaning of inclusive and extractive hegemony, together with the concepts of legitimacy and trade I will present below a table, with the mention that, in this paper, I analyze only the case of inclusive hegemony for the United States.

Table1. U.S. Hegemonic Model during the Cold War.

<b>International institutions</b>	<b>Political dimension</b>	<b>Legitimacy</b> Acceptation of authority by rank two great powers and weaker states (USA) – inclusive Imposition of authority (Soviet Union) – extractive	<b>Indicators</b> Degree of submission Acceptance/imposition of institutional frameworks	<b>International manifestations</b> Inclusive hegemony (USA) Extractive hegemony (USSR)
	<b>Economic dimension</b>	<b>Trade</b> Free: USA (Bretton Woods System – IMF, World Bank, Marshall Plan, OECD) – inclusive Centralized: USSR (COMECON) – extractive	<b>Indicators</b> How the decisions are taken: consensual or pluralist on a multilateral basis (USA) or centralized (USSR)	

After the Second World War, the United States emerged victorious, as part of the United Nations coalition, with a strong economy and army, which had the advantage of the atomic bomb. Also, in contrast with some its allies and its enemies the United States did not suffer great manpower losses<sup>10</sup> and no battle was fought on their national territory, except the attack from the Pearl Harbor that determined their full involvement in the war. Therefore, the United States had a great advantage at the end of the Second World War and represented a serious candidate for hegemony. Moreover, the U.S. internal political model was attractive and also doubled by a strong economy. This part of the paper is dedicated to an analysis for the U.S. hegemonic model during the Cold War, based on the theoretical framework proposed in the precedent part of the essay.

Legitimacy and trade also will represent the main concepts around my analysis is concentrated, as these two institutions were taken by the United States from their national level to the international arena. Also, in the present subchapter, based on the concepts of legitimacy and trade I aim to demonstrate that the United States promoted an inclusive hegemonic model, designed to include more and more states into its political and economic order.

First of all, I argue that the United States legitimated to the international society after the Second World War according to their internal institutional framework and from there the common portrayal as “the leader of the free world”, in a good and evil struggle with the Soviet Union for global domination (Tierney: 2017). If I am to take into account the definition of Roskin et al. about legitimacy regarding the community sense about the fairness of governmental lead, thus determining allegiance to it and making the government efficient, and transpose it to the international arena, I argue that the United States were depicted as a fair great power and the other states acknowledged its authority and did not need to impose its domination on the European allies.

Therefore, I argue that the states (the community) which acknowledged the U.S. authority after the Second World War were convinced about the fairness of the American leadership. Moreover, the American internal political and economic institutions were inclusive, defining the United States as a democracy, and I argue that there represented another reason for the at-

tractiveness of the U.S. hegemonic model. One of the arguments for acceptance of American legitimacy can be the decision of the Western European states to enter in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance in 1949, siding with the United States against the political-military threat posed by the Soviet Union (Warren: 2010, 7), especially that in 1948 there was the Communist takeover of the democratically elected authorities in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade (NATO: 2018a). Moreover, at the side of the United States in NATO during the Cold War, stood the following countries, some of them great powers: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal (entered in 1949), Greece, Turkey (in 1952), West Germany (1955) and Spain (1982) (NATO: 2018b), countries mainly from the Western Europe, which benefited from the Marshall Plan, therefore with stronger economies than the Eastern ones.

The United States promoted their hegemonic model through international institutions, as embodied in the international organizations which appeared after the Second World War. I take into account the United Nations and NATO (for political institutions) and the Bretton Woods System and Marshall Plan which were institutional frameworks based on inclusivity, the same as in the American internal institutional framework.

I argue that the model of inclusive political institutions was integrated and went hand in hand with the advancing of inclusive economic institutions on the international arena by the United States. The first argument can be found in the U.S. promotion of economic prosperity in Europe, through the \$13 billion European Recovery Plan (Marshall Plan) from 1947 (Weissman: 2013, 111). The Marshall Plan had at its core the ideas of Woodrow Wilson, of international multilateralism and international economic and diplomatic cooperation, arguing that a strong economy and free trade would lower the chances to war. Moreover, the idea of multilateralism sustains the equal status of the participants (Ibid.). The Marshall Plan was designed to aid the entire European continent, but fearing from economic and political consequences against the communists, Stalin rejected the plan (Ibid.: 112-114).

Beside its altruistic motivations, the Marshall Plan represented also a propagandistic instrument for promotion the American model of democracy (which I have detailed in the fifth chapter) as a counterweight to the communist ideology and spreading, coming into completing the Truman Doctrine of diverting Greece and Turkey from the road to communism (Ibid.: 112). In order to administrate the Marshall Plan the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation was created in 1948, based on ideas of economic interdependence and cooperation. Over time, encouraged by its success other countries from outside Europe joined the OEEC and in 1961 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was created (OECD: 2018), lately including states as Japan, Australia and New Zealand (Christopher: 1998, 165).

Thus, I argue that the Marshall Plan represented an American non-coercive instrument to legitimize as the righteous and fair leading power to the World. In fact, the democracy promotion represented one of the key aspects of American legitimization in the world, as the leader of free world and supporter of open economy and free trade.

Another institutional framework, which appeared earlier than the Marshall Plan, was the Bretton Woods System resulted from U.S. – British negotiations and signed by forty-four states in 1944 in order to promote a liberal international order, in accordance with the American interests (Ikenberry: 1993). The Bretton Woods System represented an attempt to reopen the world economy, favoring “a liberal multilateral system” and “an unprecedented experiment in international economic constitution building”, which gave birth to a “liberal world econo-

my”, which, fifty years later, attracted the former Soviet satellites (Ibid.: 155). Particularly, in order to conceive a frame for economic cooperation inside the Bretton Woods System, it was created the International Monetary Fund, having the main responsibility to maintain a stable international monetary system (IMF: 2018). Another body included in the Bretton Woods System was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), with the role of assisting the war thorn countries to rebuild and develop their infrastructure (The World Bank: 2018).

Another economic institution at the international level, and where the United States were present, was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, created in 1947, with the goal to reduce the trade tariffs between the member states. Beside the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and other Western European countries, GATT comprised also Japan (Bown and Irwin: 2015, 1).

In sum, the American model of hegemony during the Cold War had an inclusive character. The United States tried to impose its domination not by force, but by legitimation as a democratic country and defender of democracy and of the “free world”, based on liberal values, and was accepted as such. In economic terms, the United States promoted the policy of free trade and tried to involve as many countries as possible in its economic order and to create economic interdependence. Therefore, the American hegemonic model was inclusive, as the United States practices were based on multilateralism, consensus and harmonizing the interests of the actors involved. As the Bretton Woods agreements show, the USA did not exclude the UK, France, Germany and even the Soviet Union (invited to the Marshall Plan) from the future benefits of the new economic world order, but involved them in devising the new framework.

If the definition of hegemony used for the present research is employed, the American hegemonic model was first based on hard power, as the United States were the strongest state from the Western hemisphere and the other superpower in a world devastated by war. Second, the ideology (liberalism, free trade) proposed by the United States was attractive enough to determine the consent and cooperation of the most important Western European states and some communist states (coerced by Stalin to renounce). Given the hegemonic model proposed, based on legitimacy and free trade, the United States tried to combine the interests of the most actors in the international system, even of the Soviet Union and other communist states (see the Marshall Plan), which refused at the command of the Soviet hegemon.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper I tried not only to demonstrate the American hegemonic model during the Cold War, but also to propose another framework to approach the study of hegemony in International Relations. The proposed framework rests in a combination of two theoretical perspectives coming from different fields, International Relations Theory and Institutional Economics. For hegemony I used a definition based on the understandings of Robert Gilpin and of Antonio Gramsci, the first perspective for hard power, while the second for ideas, to complete the force component of hegemony. Therefore, hegemony represents a relation between hard power for domination of the weaker states and an exported ideology, that has a degree of attractivity for other states (especially from the rank 2), by combining the most actors’ interests to create a system of alliances that sustain the position of the hegemon. According to the model proposed by the hegemon, hegemony can be inclusive and extractive. In the first case, the hege-

mon is considered to be the legitimate leader by the most states in the international system (especially rank 2) and takes into consideration the interests of the many states. In the second case, the leader builds its legitimacy by force and exerts hegemony mostly in its advantage, by not taking into account the others' interests<sup>11</sup>.

The hegemonic model that characterized the American hegemony during the Cold War was inclusive. The United States has taken into consideration the political and economic interests of other states in the international system. It has built a system comprised of a political alliance (NATO), in order to check and balance the Soviet threat in Europe, and a net of economic international institutions (the Bretton Woods system). The institutions that were backed by the United States during the Cold War brought their contribution to maintaining the peace in Europe after the Second World War and to the prosperity of the Western European countries, which were members of NATO and the European Union. As a short comparison, the Soviet hegemonic model was based on brute force and was imposed and maintained by the occupying Soviet military forces. Indeed, also the United States maintained forces in Western Europe, but were not used to impose and maintain a repressive regime. The United States were favorable to a political and economic systems that would resemble to their internal counterparts, a fact that represent the force (and maybe advantage) of the U.S. hegemonic model, as compared with the Soviet one.

Regarding the theoretical model, I consider that there is place for to refine it, especially that some characteristics of the types of institutions advanced by AR are not fully developed in my framework in order to be adapted to the IR theory. I consider that one component that needs to be clarified in order to fit the IR explanation is the concept of private property, which in the internal realm has a clear significance. Beside the analysis of the US hegemonic model, I consider that the theoretical framework devised by me in this paper represents another contribution and, possible, a starting point to another view on hegemony in international relations.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See the Truman Doctrine, designed to prevent Greece and Turkey to slide down to the Soviet orbit (1947/2018).

<sup>2</sup> See the Marshall Plan, designed for the economic recovery of Europe after the destructions (1947/2018).

<sup>3</sup> Critics may argue that the time span is too long, but my argument is that this paper is intended to be more theoretical than empirical. It is designed to test a theoretical model.

<sup>4</sup> For other relevant perspectives on hegemony see *power transition theory* – A.F.K. Organski (1968), Jacek Kugler and Organski (1989) and Randall Schweller (1993, 1994, 1998); *declinist school* – Paul Kennedy (1988), Fareed Zakaria (2009) and Charles Kupchan (2012); *offensive realism* – John J. Mearsheimer (2001); *neoclassical realism* – Christopher Layne (2006); and *liberalism* – John Ikenberry (2001).

<sup>5</sup> For other HST authors, I have consulted Charles Kindleberger (1986), George Modelski (1978, 1987, 1988) and Robert Keohane (1984).

<sup>6</sup> It is important to mention that in the classical Marxist view, the ideas are a derivate from the economic structure, being part of the superstructure. For more details, see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (2014).

<sup>7</sup> For other relevant Marxist authors see V. I. Lenin (1916/1999) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 2004, 2011);

<sup>8</sup> For other perspectives on NIE see Ronald H. Coase (1937 and 1960), Oliver E. Williamson (Sept. 2000), Douglass C. North (1990, 2005) and Elinor Ostrom (2007). Due to space requirements only the theoretical framework taken into consideration will be presented (extractive and inclusive institutions).

<sup>9</sup> In this paper I will analyze the American hegemony during the Cold War from the perspective of inclusive hegemony (as I argue that the US hegemony is inclusive), while the extractive hegemony can be used to analyze the Soviet hegemonic model.

<sup>10</sup> For the list of World War Two casualties by country see The National WW II Museum (2018).

<sup>11</sup> This is the case for the Soviet Union, but, given the space requirements, another analysis is considered to be published in the future.

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