



Politics, Philosophy and  
Economics

*Course of Political Sociology*

**Hegemonic  
Culture and  
Global Politics**

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## Introduction

Is there truly no precedent to our current condition? Do we really live in a 'Brave New World' unlike anything else we experienced before? Questions of this kind are not exactly new. This feeling of novelty and progress has been expressed in political, social and common thought for as long the civilization has existed. Each new generation believes that history starts with them and that there is no knowledge nor experience that preceded theirs. Ancient Greek poet Hesiod once complained of the youth, describing them as being disrespectful towards their elders and being frivolous, and expressed concern that one day the society will be led by them. Complaints such as these might as well have been said yesterday, word for word. The feelings that the end of times is coming soon are nothing new and are in fact, quite amusingly, ancient. However, to be fair to the older generations they are the main witnesses to the changing times. They are the ones who can actually compare the world of today to the one of their own youth, and testify that there always is something that differentiates contemporary society from its predecessor. Constitutive elements that determine the social dynamics are inevitably being changed with the passage of time. That fact alone justifies and explains the necessity of retrospective analysis. Despite criticisms of this kind being ubiquitous throughout history, to the point of irritation, it is worth considering what merit concerns of this or similar nature hold. We need to determine and assess the criteria based on which it is possible to establish at what point is the degree of change in social fabric and dynamics so severe and extensive, that it can be said with full confidence that yes indeed, we are dealing with a completely new phenomenon, that science has not studied yet and should consider? Before we determine the criteria and the degrees of alterations in those criteria, we need to determine the scale. To do that it is necessary to examine the driving engines of today's society and highlight how they differentiate modern age from times passed.

One of the first hallmarks of the contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century world that comes to one's mind, is the process of globalisation. Globalisation is an expedient way to characterize the modern society if one does not wish to bother to enter into a serious discussion. In order to fully understand the complexities and uniqueness of the present day, it is far from enough to begin and end the discussion with 'globalism' as being the one and only answer. Oversimplifying analysis of the modern society by not examining the type and characteristics of globalism, would inevitably lead to false conclusions. Thus, it is imperative to examine what constitutes the modern incarnation of globalism and to determine how these elements behave and interact with each other.

To facilitate later discussion, we need to establish how modern globalism differs from various forms of social dynamics in the past, which also had some global characteristics. Historically, there were various attempts to unify the world under one political rule and to superimpose one cultural concept. Having said this, we need to note that these occurrences mostly took place in the form of imperial conquests that aimed to establish the rule of a single entity (it may have been a single state, dynasty, or even religion). The examples that immediately come to mind

are the Roman Empire, Alexander the Great's Greece, the Ottoman Empire, and even the Arab Caliphate. The common denominator in all these, and indeed many more cases, is the attempt to subordinate as great a territory as possible under the same rule. It is worth noting at least two factors that clearly distinguish empires of the past from the global society of today. One is the fact that, however large those empires were, they were never truly global. The extent of the political or military might of those entities, as well as the influence of their cultural dominance, was still limited and contained within state boundaries. For that reason alone, we can easily distinguish between the global world of today and empires of the past. When discussing the global village, we perceive it as an occurrence that spills over state lines. Economic connections, political models, and common culture seem to have a life of their own that supersedes the political, economic, or general cultural dynamics of individual states. Similar cultural phenomena occur in various parts of the world seemingly independently, simultaneously, and in very similar forms. Let us notice that some of the traditional dynamics in interstate relations have not disappeared altogether. The global world is not a world of perpetual peace and harmony. Imperial intentions and conflicts are no less prevalent in today's world than they were in the past. The global world seems to glide over all the disturbances and seemingly has a life of its own that persists through shifts in political supremacies, economic crises, or other social challenges.

The second factor is the method and channels of spreading the dominant cultures. The motivating factors for creating empires, we might say, were old-fashioned globalization attempts aimed at exercising vast political domination and extracting maximal economic benefits in favour of the conqueror. Stimulating the creation of a global hegemonic culture may have been no more than an afterthought, if even that. However, even though it was obviously not the main aim of enlarging an empire, we could argue that the conquests in question did bring about some cultural globalization as well. Let us mention the example of the Ottoman Empire, which encouraged its subjects to convert to Islam and thus acquire many benefits, even opening doors for prosperity and the possibility of personal career advancement to the top ranks of state structures. Furthermore, the Roman Empire tolerated local customs and religious practices, as long as imperial subjects recognized and worshiped Roman gods as well. These practices did bring about some degree of cultural, or rather religious, globalization. Having said that, we would be hard-pressed to prove that either religion from our examples was truly global. Also, the imperial religious unification was a result of state oppression rather than a unanimously and freely adopted practice by the subjects. We can clearly see that the cultural globalization of the pre-20th-century world was in service of the economic and political interests of one dominant entity (the Empire) and was disseminated predominantly through channels of oppression. On the other hand, at least superficially, we observe that the dominant cultures in the modern world are distributed through the means of soft power (communication technologies, media, film industry, etc.). This makes cultural exchange and the adoption and practice of the dominant global culture feel more organic and democratic. Now that we have established clear lines of distinction between historical attempts at globalization and the

modern global world, let us try to determine the timeframe within which we can discuss the existence of modern globalism. What date or event is to be considered as the beginning of globalism?

To determine with confidence this 'globalist constitution' of the modern society, it will be helpful to trace the history of globalism from the end of the Second World War. The reason for selection of this specific period is that the globalism as we know it today began its life exactly at this moment in history.

If we were to adopt a metaphorical approach and compare the birth of globalism to the actual birth of a baby, then the United Nations will certainly be the head that comes out first. International organizations, such as the UN, that were composed of many different member states certainly did exist before, but the UN was an innovation in itself, as it asserted its authority upon the world stage, and upon individual countries, much more strongly and intensely than any other international institution beforehand (The League of Nations being the perfect example). As a consequence of the fallout of the Second World War, nations of the world were now forced to cooperate more than before to ensure peaceful and stable international relations under the rules of international law to which all the member states needed to adhere to. This international law, in order to be coherent and unambiguous, was designed in the humanistic spirit of respect, freedom, dignity and equality. The framework of international law was hence largely democratic in nature. The creation of the United Nations is the first efficient attempt to ensure the rule of law on the international stage. Traditionally the implementation of legal provisions is guaranteed and insured by states through mechanisms of force. This basic principle cannot be implemented on the international level since there is no entity above states, brandishing supreme force that can guarantee direct implementation of international law. For that reason, the positive international legal regulation had to be determined through conventions, passed through the bodies of the United Nations and adopted by individual states. With UN's sizeable influence in mind, the democratic spirit of international law influenced political development of every country (or any other political entity). When undertaking any action, each political body anywhere on the globe had to consider international law. This is the first instance in the global history that the world was united under the same set of regulations, the same legal standards, that have been agreed to by states, rather than forced by one power onto subjected entities. One could argue that modern globalization begun with the globalization of laws.

Furthermore, the UN had a conducive effect to further development of other international institutions whose activities added to the process of economic and social/cultural globalization. UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, WHO etc. shaped and determined the social and civil fabric of contemporary world, while the organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization etc. significantly contributed to the creation of an interconnected global economy. Through these institutional foundations globalism was truly born.

As already mentioned, the UN did manage to provide framework for establishing one of the most peaceful eras in human history. Modus operandi of the international relations system significantly changed, and while inter-state relations were not always peaceful and harmonious, they were profoundly different from those in the previous centuries. Power politics did not disappear though. They just assumed another shape.

The way for a political entity to achieve its goals was not through war and military success, but through economic machinations. At one point, it became obvious for previous colonial empires that abandoning their direct control over the colonies they had in their legal possession in favour of subtle economic domination is far more beneficial and effective. At the same time the realities of power balance were such that the world became bipolar, thus eliminating the possibility for one centre to wield dominant influence. Equally, economic power politics was not exercised only in the area of the Third World where previous colonies were situated. If it is to be assumed that the end goal of every country is the economic prosperity and a high GDP, then surely the most fertile ground for that goal to be achieved is a peaceful world where conflict is rare and trade among nations is the norm. That is exactly how the global consumer society came to be.

When world politics first assumed its relatively more peaceful character at the end of the second world war, slowly but surely, economies of the world became intertwined. There were not so many obstacles to the international trade and flow of labour and capital after 1945, and even fewer after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Companies had an expanded market at their disposal, and there was little to no financial reasons as to why these big corporations should not access potential new consumers and buyers of their goods and service that lived in those areas of the world which previously were not a part of their traditional market base. These companies then established themselves firmly as suppliers of goods and services on several continents, and their produce began to be consumed en masse.

This economic process thus assumed a social character as well. Cultural significance of effects and consequences of economic globalisation is not negligible either. To simplify this complex phenomenon for pragmatic reasons, it transpired that when the most of the world's population consume product A from the company A, this has potential to alter the social fabric in subtle and often initially unforeseen ways. These changes manifest themselves over time. Globalisation and emergence of global society was indeed one of the main consequences of this process.

The process of globalisation would however be incomplete and would have never reached the current dimensions if there were no, often revolutionary, improvements in communication technologies. The concepts of global society and globalism would not be so relevant or controversial as they are today, if the messages that are sent to the other side of the Earth would still take weeks to reach their destinations. But with the advance of communication devices, networks, platforms etc., as well as their widespread diffusion around the globe, important societal developments took place, and quite possibly these changes are irreversible.

The paramount novelty of this new digital communication era was of course the invention of the internet. Previous improvements in telecommunication technologies, mailing systems and other communicative devices of a similar kind certainly did alter the social fabric in important ways. However, internet had no precedent in terms of the scale of its effects. Not only was it possible now to talk about changes in social dynamics, it also became commonplace to observe cultural developments and alterations caused by the presence and use of the internet. The distance between two people corresponding with each other became an irrelevant fact and no longer a barrier to economic, political, cultural or any other exchange.

Through the creation of large forums intended for public discourse on the internet, it is argued that on these platforms the global society truly took its firm shape. The leading nation in embracing these novelties were the United States of America. It also became the birthplace of the most advanced technologies as well as networks of international communication that became an integral part of everyday life of a modern human.

The term 'Americanisation' becomes relevant at this point in discussion because American users and American social media platforms, as well as regular online media outlets that come from the US, are arguably the most influential. The American culture did tend to dominate modern forms of cultural expression before the age of internet, but now the degree of Americanisation exponentially increased through this new online medium. American culture and politics are one of the most discussed subjects online despite the United States not even having the largest population on Earth. This fact alone points to the US domination in the field of modern technologies as one of the main reasons for the amount of power the United States have.

Americanisation of the world populace was reflected in the mainstream political thought as well, in which democracy became the 'star' ideology and a measure of common sense. It is important to note that the spread of democracy as one of the main ideologies of today's world did not begin with the internet and Americanisation, but appeared as the aftermath of the changing political balances after the Second world war as well as through establishment of the UN, and possibly even earlier than that. Internet is and was used, as an admittedly very powerful channel, to continue this process of promoting democracy. All of these facts bear proof to the enormous and profound effect that the modern technology had on the cultural and political values of the modern world, where it is possible to observe many more similarities between the societies than ever before. Common culture is converging around the same trends, such as memes and music to name a few. Economic culture also became predominantly capitalistic thanks to the facilitation of the financial procedures through internet and other communication devices, while political culture is likewise more and more influenced by the diffusion of democracy through the world wide web.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of main engines of globalisation but it is a helpful start to fully understanding the complexities of this new world order. By studying this process, it is possible to observe, among many different and unique elements, the tendency of society in the

broad sense (including things such as ideology, culture, economy, mentality etc.) to converge upon the single *modus operandi* and the way of being. This occurrence is expressed through the relative uniformity of ideology on the world stage (with few notable exemptions), or through the market capitalist system of economy that is omnipresent around the globe.

Based on what we have demonstrated so far, it is inevitable to conclude that indeed the world and the different societies that inhabit it have assumed more uniformity in culture, politics and economics. It is now necessary to examine the implications of these rather dramatic changes, in terms of the phenomena researched by the political science.

There are indeed the classical theories of international relations that offered explanations as to how and in what way the nations act and for what purpose. They examine causes of political dynamics; identify main sources of influence as well as the aims of political activities undertaken under those influences. Arguably, the classical political theories were reflective of the historical period in which they emerged and offered viable explanation of the political phenomena of the age. However, if the modern world really did change in a fundamental manner as previously discussed, then it is worth exploring whether these theories took into account omnipresent social dynamics and whether they can still be applicable in modern circumstances that stemmed out of historically unprecedented social changes.

All good theories have a degree of flexibility, and that fact is certainly true for the classical theories of international relations. Recognizing the basic models that survive all the social changes, determining the phases and stages of transformation of these models is a common trait of these theories. Perhaps most scholarly curiosity is raised by the Marxist theory of interstate relations. Immanuel Wallerstein, famous American Marxist scholar, is the author of the 'World System' theory in which he argues that the world is divided into peripheral, semi-peripheral and core countries. In this divided system, the countries of the core exploit the peripheral, Third World, countries as well as semi-peripheral ones. This is done through economic devices and ideologies such as neo-liberalism that in turn create a neo-colonial order in which core nations are the de-facto rulers of the world. This theory is interesting and provokes curiosity because it has potential to expose the significant disadvantage of globalisation. Wallerstein's theory outlines the existence of a certain hegemonic structure that operates worldwide.

The concept of a hegemon is well known and ubiquitous in the Marxist thought and literature and the hegemon (the ruling elite typically) is one of the central points of analysis. If it is to be assumed that Wallerstein's World System theory is correct and that there really is a hegemon (or a hegemonic group) who does the exploitation, sometimes taking on a different appearance in true shape-shifter form, then through what means does that occur?

The Marxist school does supply us with a possible answer to this question, and that answer can be found in Antoni Gramsci's concept of the cultural hegemony. Gramsci was an Italian Marxist intellectual, who contributed to the communist thought in many ways, and one of his most



significant contributions is the concept of cultural hegemony. He argues that the process of exploitation and domination of the working (subaltern) class by dominant elites is facilitated by the culture of the society the workers find themselves in. This culture is actually the culture of the ruling elites that exploit the workers, and this culture is designed and reproduced by the elites for their benefit, but in subtle and non-forceful ways. While coming to these conclusions, Gramsci was thinking of singular national societies and his idea did not cross borders. If there truly is at this point in time, a global uniform society, in which the process of exploitation is also present and alive, is it possible to argue that the hegemonic culture as defined by Gramsci also exists at a global level?

## Chapter 1

In order to determine the dynamics of culture and globalism and to reach valid conclusions about this complex inter-play, it is imperative to fully understand Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, and to this end, his sources of inspiration are a helpful start. Obviously, Gramsci was heavily influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and their philosophy provided foundations for Gramsci's theories. The roots of Gramscian cultural hegemony can be found in 'The German Ideology' by Marx and Engels.

*Quote: 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.'* (The German Ideology, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1846).

The elites within a society are the ones who control the economic factors (material force) and by that virtue have a monopoly on the cultural factors (mental production), such as the ideology, tradition, institutions etc. These cultural factors are necessary to consolidate the power of the ruling class, as they are used to justify the current material relationship between the elite and the workers that are exploited. This relationship is presented as being common sense and natural way to function, as the authors further state:

*For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the*

*form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.'*  
(The German Ideology, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1846).

On this theoretical basis, Gramsci further elaborates and explores the concept of cultural hegemony. In his numerous writings, Gramsci does not see the State as being the sole responsible actor that establishes the hegemonic culture within a society. He ascribes the principal role in this process to other players, such as the civil society at large, cultural institutions, family, school/university systems, media, etc. One of the key points he makes in this discussion is that the way in which the hegemonic culture within a society is established effectively is through subtle and unassuming delicate means. Media is the prime example of these methods as the reproduction of cultural symbols is achieved through the popular media, which holds cultural monopoly over people's consciousness. Schools and family, in similar fashion, instill and diffuse values in children in their formative years, and those values will most likely remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Gramsci sees hegemonic culture as something that is somewhat organic and autonomous when being established and of extreme use and importance to the ruling elites. He considers this subtle way of establishing political domination upon a society as vastly superior to the violent revolutionary ways. Because of this, he was critical of the Russian revolution, which used these exact aggressive methods to gain power and establish the Soviet Union. The idea behind this disagreement was that it is much better for people to come to the conclusions about politics 'by themselves', through dissemination of values and ideas through media and other cultural institutions in peaceful and subtle ways which makes a regular person believe they formed their own opinions by themselves, while in reality they are being spoon-fed. The forceful method of the Soviets was counterproductive as the communist ideas were forced upon the population, which obviously has the potential to create resentment and by implication, political instability.

Gramsci saw how the capitalists established hegemonic cultures in Western Europe through peaceful means, and in doing so justifying exploitative relations of production and establishing them as being common sense, while also neutralizing dissenting voices and critics, pushing them to the margins of society to rot. He rightfully wondered why the communists could not do the same thing. Achieving the revolution through such a feat would guarantee the political and social stability unlike what happened in Russia where the bloody civil war was the result of the revolution.

Having elaborated upon Gramsci's theory of hegemonic culture, it is worth considering if it is possible to talk about the same process, as defined by Gramsci, in today's age. By concluding in the introduction that we live in a globalized world, and by analyzing the most important elements of it, a retrospective analysis is warranted to ascertain the validity of this hegemonic mechanism in contemporary era. Gramsci identifies formal

and informal institutions as being responsible for the production and reproduction of the dominant ideology/culture within a society. The process of production and reproduction is characterized as being delicate, subtle in nature, and by no means aggressive or forceful. These machinations, having performed their functions within a state society, justify the ideology of the ruling elite as being common sensical and perfectly natural, pushing the dissenting opinions towards the margins of society. The examples of this kind of cultural hegemony from Gramsci's time on Earth include the market capitalist and democratic United States, and the authoritarian conservative Russian Tsardom (with its exiled communists and socialists in Siberia) to name a few.

Is it possible to find the same instances of hegemonic culture establishing itself within a society today? The answer to that question is positive, as there really are not that many obstacles to stop this process from manifesting itself. Although the world has "gone global", states still exist and there are not so many differences between the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century states that prevent this process being possible altogether. Informal and formal institutions and agents of hegemony are still present and in a certain way even more powerful than they were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Media and education have a much stronger foothold within the civil society than they did in previous century, and it is hard to avoid their influence. Some forms of dissemination of hegemonic culture are even sanctioned by the law. For example, it is illegal not to attend elementary school (mandatory education decreed by law).

However, to call this phenomenon in the digital revolution era, the same as the one in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would be misleading. As previously mentioned, there are not many factors differentiating the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century states from each other, but the few that do exist are significant. Most obvious and important of these is of course the globalization of politics, economy, culture and society as a whole. This fact is not without interest.

How does the process of establishing cultural hegemony change within these circumstances? Perhaps cultural hegemony really did remain the same within individual states societies, but it could also have 'expanded'. If the culture really did converge, or is slowly converging still, into a single unit in this new globalized society, then is it possible to discuss the likelihood of cultural hegemony operating on a global level? Is there a hegemonic culture in a global society? Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony explores the process of birth and reproduction of the dominant culture within a single national society and he does not explore the possibility of a hegemonic culture that transcends borders. This is understandable as he belongs to an era when the talk of a global society was a fantasy. However, global society is now a reality, and all of a sudden, Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory can perhaps be applied to international relations.

Going back to the Wallerstein's theory of the World System, the nations on Earth are divided into the core countries that exploit semi-peripheral and peripheral countries by

selling them expensive consumption goods, manipulating their economies through neo-colonial tools such the IMF, World Bank etc., forcing them to hard-work for little pay (such as Amazon and other big corporations), and using their vast amounts natural resources for their own gain. It is self-evident that the countries of the 'core' as defined by Wallerstein are the hegemon in the current era, as was Rome during its peak, as was Alexander's Greece, as was ancient China and so on.

Core countries of today would mainly fall within the block of countries we refer to as the West. The West has a long colonial history, and by colonialism, the western countries became the most powerful nations on Earth. It is not possible to say that the West was the hegemon of the world during the colonial era, as the Western countries often competed against each other and had antagonistic relations, so it is hard to refer to the West as the single political unit at least in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The West certainly did form the 'core' in the Wallerstein's sense, but despite that, it is not possible to refer to them as being a single hegemon. It is more accurate to use the term in plural - 'hegemons'. Regardless of whether we treat the West as a single monolith hegemonic entity or as a "tribe" of hegemon, core countries are in a constant process of economic exploitation of the peripheral countries and the core must justify this exploitation and present it as being something good and desired.

This of course relates closely to cultural hegemony as defined by Gramsci. If his theory is to be applied at a global level, there must a country or a group of countries that enjoys a status of the hegemon which spreads its culture to the rest of the world. It will also be logical to select Wallerstein's group of 'core' countries to fill this role in the ensuing analysis by the virtue of the fact that core countries (West) not only enjoy the economic superiority but also have an impressive amount of cultural capital as well.

Americanization is one of the prime examples of this cultural might. The United States have a considerable amount of soft power, which they obviously use to their benefit. If there is a hegemonic culture on a global scale, than the hegemon must have economic and cultural might to ensure the existence of hegemonic culture.

It follows that what is referred to today as the "West" is the ideal candidate for this hegemon, as the Western countries today are among the richest in the world. What actually solidifies their candidacy for the title of "the global hegemon" is the fact that the Western culture was spread and is being spread around the world constantly. It is not only the 'pop' culture that is relevant in this discussion, but the economic and political culture as well (perhaps more than any other type of culture).

To prove that the Western political/economic culture is the dominant one in this day and age, it is enough to look into the internal configurations of the countries around the world. The dominant economic system by which the whole world operates is the free market capitalist system. Capitalism developed precisely in the countries of the Western

Europe, which then spread this system of economy to the rest of the world, through either colonialism or other means. Again looking at the internal configurations of the countries of the world, it is possible to detect a repeating pattern of multi-party parliamentary governments being the most often witnessed type of political system in modern states worldwide. Parliamentary system of government with multiple parties representing the citizens was also born in Europe and spread around the world. It is weird to observe that countries so far from Europe, and with fundamentally different political cultures from the European one, adopt a parliamentary system of government with little, if any, modifications that could fit specific needs of the country in question or reflect its historical background. To say that parliamentary democracy is the only natural type of government and that all other models of governance and basis of sovereignty are flawed, would be incorrect, ignorant and even racist to an extent.

For these reasons, it is safe to assume that western culture really does tend to dominate world politics and economy. Other candidates for the position of the world hegemon, such as China, despite their enormous economic power, fail to meet the cultural criteria of the world hegemon. Western countries simply have too much soft power as compared to Russia and China for example. Both Russia and China are superpowers in their own right, but again, that is mainly due to their powerful economies and militaries. Soft power is something that their policymakers should prioritize in the near future if they wish to establish a true multipolar world they talk about these days.

The importance of the English language as lingua franca, only speeds up the dissemination of the western hegemon values. Easy recognition of the main messages by general population when transmitted in English, gives a significant head start to western countries, and in this case mainly to the United States, in spreading and maintaining dominance of the hegemonic culture. That fact is recognized by both China and Russia as rising hegemons. China in particular shows awareness of the need to make itself more accessible to general populace, mainly through trade. At the same time China is deeply aware of the need to overcome the cultural barriers between itself and the western world. Many have noticed that in trade relations Chinese traders assume western names, thus creating a more personable and comfortable trading environment for their western counterparts. Similar principles are applied at the state level as well. Most notably China, ever the great planner, has defined the development of future relations between itself and the rest of the world through the "The Belt and Road" plan. Conceived as a modern reincarnation of the ancient Silk Road, this plan in fact revitalizes Chinese economic position and influence in the world economy. At the same time the plan incorporates elaborate methods of disseminating Chinese culture and even language. Most notable in the area of cultural activities is the establishment of Confucius Universities worldwide, providing free of charge learning of Mandarin language for all interested parties. Clearly the Belt and the Road lays foundations and paths for implementation of Chinese hegemonic cultural dominance. The pattern is very

much recognized by the western countries, which resent these activities by the Chinese government. However, the forces of economy and political influence makes it impossible for the West to simply ignore China or excommunicate it from their hegemonic space. The dynamics between the established hegemon – the West - and that of a rising China may lead to developments that will put political theories to a further test. The global world as we know it today may assume new forms, being transformed to yet another avatar of hegemonic culture or may even regress to a state resembling XX century, where hegemonies are fenced off by state borders, thus reviving the original power of individual states.

Before any of these developments actually take place, we may conclude that today, the West is the ideal candidate for the world hegemon. It will be helpful for further discussion to determine who or which entities specifically compromise the West. To determine this, carefully detecting economic, cultural, ideological and political ties and relations will help us find the answer. The first pick for the members of the West should be the United States, as it is the dominant superpower with cultural and economic superiority. Then we should also take into the account the NATO alliance, as it represents one of the dominant military powers around the world, which is not a small matter when discussing who the real hegemon is. With NATO, Canada and a considerable number of European countries enter the calculation. The European Union is also worth adding as it is a close political, economic and cultural ally of the NATO alliance and the United States, and is one of the main advocates of the hegemonic culture that will be discussed in the next chapter. This maps out the general area of the West, but this cartographic endeavor is by no means completely accurate. For example, NATO alliance also includes countries that have negligible political power, weak economies, pathetic militaries and no soft power to speak of, such as Montenegro and North Macedonia. It cannot be claimed in all seriousness that Montenegro and Macedonia are important countries worthy of a hegemonic status, when they can barely assert themselves on the world stage, to the point that people do not even know that they exist. In the same vein of thought, this attempt to map out the West also leaves out countries that are generally considered to be part of the Western block in the common discourse, such as Australia, New Zealand, as well as Japan and South Korea. Indeed, the 'West' as a political term is broad and indefinite with no clear boundaries. Listing NATO, USA and the European Union as the constitutive parts of the common understanding of the term 'West' helps to facilitate the later discussion of the hegemonic culture, as these three actors are the most relevant and important ones in any practical discussion of world politics.

## Chapter 2

The task at hand, before elaborating any further, is to determine the kind of hegemonic culture that we are focusing on. The quest to find a global hegemonic culture runs the risk of being too long and broad if all genres of culture are to be included in the analysis. We would need to inspect nearly endless number of criteria and inspect how various cultural forms adhere to various criteria. It would make our task cumbersome bordering on being impossible to fulfil. It follows that this endeavor would yield futile results if its scope is not limited. Throughout this analysis, several types or categories of culture were mentioned already, such as the economic culture, political, civil etc. Dividing culture into these simpler and more compact elements helps us understand where the focus should be when looking for the hegemonic culture of the world.

To pick the economic culture as the sole subject of analysis is tempting. It might even be the easiest cultural form to determine given that capitalism has become ubiquitous economic model in the modern world. However, although at the first glance it seems that capitalism is the dominant model, in reality it might not actually be the case. Despite the apparent dominance, it seems more and more certain that the market capitalism has plateaued and is even losing its foothold in the global society. Without a question, capitalist types of economy still dominate the world but there has also been a strong pushback against this model of functioning in all areas of the globe.

Gramsci defined hegemonic culture as being so well established within the minds of the population to the point that this culture is considered to be common sense and to question its validity would be seen as irrational behavior that results in a figurative (or literal) exile of anyone who dared second guess the status quo. Problems immediately present themselves when we consider capitalism for this role. Having this definition in mind, it is hard for capitalism to match all the requirements to be considered a hegemonic culture of the world, not even by a stretch. Capitalism has become a deeply controversial and problematic ideology within the global society, and a growing number of people, intellectuals, institutions and even governments have become opposed to it. These critics are by no means on the margins of society, as they would be expected to be if capitalism was indeed a hegemonic culture. They are the front and center of most important public discourse forums. Intellectuals and politicians such as Slavoj Žižek, Yanis Varoufakis, Alexandra Occasio-Cortez and many others have all gained a significant momentum in recent times and they are exercising an enormous amount of influence upon younger generations that will eventually lead the world. That does not necessarily mean that communist or social democratic types of economy will replace capitalism and come to dominate the world economy in the next couple of decades but it is safe to assume that changes to status quo will be made in the near future. The exploitative nature of international capitalism has been made apparent through the spread of social media, which made the news, and world events significantly more available for consumption by large masses. The news filters, mostly imposed in traditional media by formal structures, virtually ceased to exist in the new digital era, whereby social media became a widely accessible public

communication platform to anyone. At the same time the fractions within the global society that wished to weaken the credibility of capitalism used these new tools to expose the issues inherent within the capitalist system. No ideology is perfect of course; any hegemonic culture will also be flawed in important and most relevant ways, but just because there are structural problems in any random ideology does not mean that that culture is not hegemonic. The fact that prevents capitalism from being a hegemonic culture is that it is going through a crisis. Elites in power, be it political or academic, are not unified in the opinion that capitalism must be preserved. For the reasons listed, capitalism cannot be considered as the hegemonic economic culture of the world. This also proves that there is, in fact, no economic global hegemonic culture.

Common or civil culture comes next under the radar of candidates worthy of consideration. It is true that there are a lot more commonalities between people from different societies today than was the case a hundred years ago. This process was facilitated by the spread of social media and has particularly affected the younger generations. Cultural symbols are being recognized and interpreted in the same way around the world. Most obvious example of this phenomenon are the internet memes that represent a certain form of humoristic and to a certain extent, artistic expression among the millennial and gen z generations. This cultural convergence also has to do a lot with the use of a common language, as the English language has become a lingua franca for the whole Earth and is used for politics, business, diplomacy, trade and of course, cultural exchange. When people engage in conversation the language they are using shapes the discourse, their minds and attitudes. If the global culture is experienced in the same language then it is fair to assume that interpretations and experiences of that culture would tend to be similar.

The perfect example of this is the already mentioned Americanization of the common culture of the world. American movies from Hollywood are omnipresent in the cinemas around the world, and so is American music, video games, etc. as well as the American way of life being promoted as ideal type of living. By watching American made movies, listening to American music etc., the consumer of these cultural products is willingly or unwillingly adopting the cultural information disbursed through these channels. It is almost inevitable to adopt some of the core values promoted by Hollywood production, adopt main esthetics, and develop the musical taste etc. At the very least, the consumer, regardless of where he or she lives, inevitably sees American culture as something recognizable and familiar, thus becoming primed to adopt it as his or hers own cultural contest.

However, to assume that common culture, however wide spread it is, can be considered as a hegemonic culture on the global level would be incorrect. While it is certainly true that, indeed common culture is converging on the global level, under the heavy and intensive influence of the American culture, to say that this automatically turns it into a global hegemonic culture would be false. To limit all of culture to examples provided above would be oversimplifying the whole issue. Common culture is far more complex than the aforementioned description implies



it to be. Sure, cultural symbols and expression have indeed become a lot more similar than they were before, but that does not immediately warrant an analysis into the possibility of global common culture being the global hegemonic culture. Culture as a concept cannot be limited to music, movies, humor etc. It is far more complex than this and it includes people's mentalities, their predispositions and interpretations, tradition etc. and in all these fields, different societies remain different. Presence of the same movies in cinemas and consumption of same memes on the internet do not in any way eradicate these particularities. For these reasons, looking for global hegemonic culture that would be common and fairly uniform in character would prove to be a futile and disappointing task.

Political culture is the last on the list worth considering. If global hegemonic culture really does exist, it is proved that it would not be of the economic or common category. However, political category has a few positive signs in favor of it in terms of identifying it as the cultural model most likely to brandish the flag of a global hegemonic culture.

Indicative of the positive signs to suggest that it is still possible to find the proof of existence of a global hegemonic culture within the realm of political culture, is Francis Fukuyama's claim that 'we have reached the end of history'. His thesis that humankind has reached its final mode of governance and politics, the so called 'liberal end of history', is reflective of the widespread belief around the world that democracy is the final and the best ideology we can hope to achieve. The consensus that prevails in the minds of the many around the world is that human beings are born equal and free and should be treated as such, and slightest divergence from this well-established belief is treated by disdain towards the second guessers. Perhaps more than any other, political culture has converged on a global level to a significant extent, and this convergence resulted in democracy becoming widespread and ubiquitous. The United Nations, and the principles by which its mission is guided, are democratic in nature and the UN is doing its best to ensure that member states also adopt these principles as their own, such as the respect for human rights, freedom, liberty, equality and so on. Next to the United Nations, a strong push for democracy is coming from the western countries towards the rest of the world. It is generally agreed that the democratic experiment has been widely successful in the West, and the Western countries enjoy higher standards of living both in economic terms, marked by high GDP's per capita, and also in social terms which are measured by parameters such as 'Freedom index', 'Corruption index', 'Human development index' and so on. It should be mentioned that these parameters are mainly designed by the western nations and were shaped and based upon the western political thought, except for perhaps determining GDP. Having said that it is worth considering that the fact that all those parameters measuring democracy and freedom within countries are showing exceptionally good results for the West but not for the other countries, may be misleading and flawed as these indexes would be naturally biased towards their creators. It would be one of the examples of self-fulfilling prophecies, not at all rare in the world of general politics. Yanis Varoufakis has an interesting insight regarding this notion. He notes that while it is true that non-western countries do have a problem with corruption (clearly, corruption as defined by the West), such as in his native Greece, in this

regard they are essentially not at all different from the West, as West is also corrupt but in different and subtler ways, where the corruption has acquired high tech forms.

Nevertheless, western countries are staunch advocates of democracy as the only sensible and natural ideology on which the sovereignty should be based and politics conducted. The West used the aforementioned indexes and a whole other arsenal of tools and methods to promote democracy worldwide. Coincidentally, West, as a general term, has been identified as the hegemon of the world in the last chapter. This naturally caused a few eyebrows to be raised. If the West truly is a global hegemon, and if this hegemon promotes a culture on a global level, is this the hegemonic culture that we were looking for? Political culture may be the ideal pick for the task ahead as it does not suffer from the same problems that economic and common culture do, in terms of fitting the criteria of a true global hegemonic culture. Democracy does not seem to be endangered, as there are no serious debates going on in the world as to whether democracy should be replaced and give way to an alternative mode of governance. Sure, there are some internal debates within the democratic circles about specific aspects of democracy, such as whether forms of direct democracy are better than the current status quo, citizenship rights, majoritarian and plurality systems etc. Nevertheless, overall there does not seem to be a vehement and a strong push from intellectual and political factions to replace democracy altogether (at least as of writing this and at least formally). Democracy is also ubiquitous around the world to such an extent that it has pretty much become a norm and a standard, and the same criticism cannot be raised towards it, such as the complaints and remarks that we have demonstrated here regarding common culture, which ultimately disqualified it from being the candidate for the global hegemonic culture. Common culture still exhibits vast amounts of differences from society to society, while democracy only shows minor configural variations. Therefore, if there truly is a global hegemonic culture, then this culture will most likely be political in nature and not any other type.

Now that the political culture has proven itself to be the most suitable candidate for the hypothetical role of global hegemonic culture that may or may not exist, it is time to choose which political culture, ideology that is, is the one that best fits the criteria. The answer to this is relatively simple as democracy was already mentioned as filling this role beforehand. However, one needs to be careful when we talk about these subjects. Democracy truly is the dominant political culture in the world, but what do we mean when we say democracy? Democracy is not such a simple one-dimensional concept. There are many types and variants of democracy that are present in global politics, and there is a lively debate as to which one suits the individual needs the best. In addition, we need to consider the fact that some of the variances of democratic arrangement may be so different from one to another, that it may be worth examining whether they belong to the same political system, regardless of the fact that they all identify themselves as democracies. If the West truly is the hegemon that promotes democracy around the world, then perhaps we need to look at what type of democracy the West adopts and then test out the capability of that democratic genre being the global hegemonic culture. But not even the collective West is in accord as to which type of democracy is the best.

There are several layers to this problem. First is the question of elections and representation. How do people in western democracies select their representatives? In most of Western Europe, the system of plurality is used to determine the composition of the national legislature or head of the executive branch of government through the election process. However, there are notable exceptions to this rule, such as countries using majoritarian system of election, like United Kingdom and United States do, and even mixed systems like Italy does. Although perhaps this aspect of democracy is not so important for this discussion due to the fact that the West generally does not advocate for any specific type of electoral system when democracy is being promoted. Then perhaps the attention should be turned to the fact that most of the West considers itself to be a liberal democracy and that this configuration of democracy should be the ideal pick for the global hegemonic culture. But this idea also encounters some issues of its own. Not all democracies claim to be liberal democracies. Most of the world democracies claim, at least formally, that they have a multi-party system, a guarantee of human rights etc. but nonetheless choose to distance themselves from the term 'liberal democracy' for one reason or another. Russian politician Vladislav Surkov has coined the term 'sovereign democracy' for the Russian system of democratic government, and in similar fashion the Chinese officials also refer to China as a democracy but further characterizing their brand of democracy as a 'socialist consultative democracy'. Even the countries that do claim a liberal democratic status cannot necessarily guarantee that description due to the many inherent problems plaguing their democracies, such as corruption, electoral fraud, low human development index etc. For these reasons, if there truly is a global hegemonic culture, which would be of political nature, that culture has to be 'democracy' but defined in general and broad terms as there is no a specific brand of democracy that unquestionably dominates the global political system. From now on, when democracy is mentioned as a global hegemonic culture, it will include any and all type of democracy, including that of North Korea even (as their official name is Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite them obviously not being a democracy in common general sense), and the fact if they really are or are not a democracy in the Western sense of the word becomes irrelevant.

### **Chapter 3**

Before jumping to the much more complex and broad global level politics, perhaps it would be wiser to select a certain historical period and examine whether there existed a hegemonic culture encompassing more countries, not on a world but on a regional level. If it indeed turns out to be this way, then the case for the global hegemonic culture becomes much stronger. It is not possible to look for this historical period before the 20<sup>th</sup> century simply because societies and countries were too disconnected from each other to even consider that such a thing could exist as a shared hegemonic culture. As we argued before, historically, states only managed to enlarge themselves by imposing military and political might on new territories and subjects. Regardless of how large individual empires might have been, they still failed to encompass the

entire world. At the same time, the lack of modern technologies made it impossible to communicate cultural trends, values, and standards on a global level, limiting cultural dissemination to the boundaries of individual states. Dominant imperial cultures were more forcefully impressed upon subjects, rather than being willingly adopted and shared.

All these elements contributed to the inability of pre-20th-century societies to truly globalize and therefore prevented the existence of a global hegemonic culture. An interesting counterpoint to this claim would be to mention the omnipresence of monarchies throughout most of the written history of humankind. Effectively all countries and nations in the world were monarchies and that reality has persisted for thousands of years. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, such as the Roman Republic or Athenian Democracy, but not even those two remained as such throughout their long histories. Athens experienced considerable periods of tyranny and monarchy and Rome became an empire after a long republican period. Not even in the Renaissance were Italian city-state republics free from certain monarchical elements within their 'constitutions' as they all had a nobility that controlled the state powers (and so did the ancient Roman republic).

The point is, monarchies were everywhere and for an exceptionally long period of time, they were not going anywhere and nobody was seriously thinking of replacing them with another type of government up to the Enlightenment period. So why is it not worth considering the history before the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a testing ground for the more limited 'regional hegemonic culture'? Surely, because of the universality of monarchies on Earth, the test does not even have to be regional but global, the implication being that the global hegemonic culture is as old as humankind is. The reason why this is all false is because of the aforementioned reason. The global society and countries were too disconnected from each other to even refer to them as being 'global'. There simply was no technology or way to overcome the extensive barriers to communication between different societies. The fact that vast majority of countries were monarchies proves nothing. While it is an interesting question as to why exactly most countries converged upon the monarchical way of statecraft, and what led to this being reality, that is a subject for another thesis and it would be too big of a digression to discuss it here. The question that is asked here is whether hegemonic culture exists in global society that shares institutions, both formal and informal, and these shared institutions did not exist in the centuries before the 20<sup>th</sup>, at least in the modern sense. One last thing worth considering when looking at history before the beginnings of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century global society is the way that hegemonic countries of the world wanted to spread their influence and affirm their domination. Ideal example to observe would be the Roman Republic and then the Roman Empire which through conquest wanted to 'civilize' the barbarians outside its borders, and by doing so establish the 'Pax Romana' or 'Roman Peace' which was really an excuse to expand its borders and make Rome richer. This so-called 'civilizing mission' was criticized by the Roman historian Tacitus that described how this mission was conducted:

*'To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace.'* (Agricola, Tacitus, AD 98).

This is one more reason why it is not possible to refer to this process of disseminating ideology as a process of cultural hegemony, as Gramsci emphasizes the 'peaceful' and non-forceful nature cultural hegemony. The Roman example should be kept in mind when comparing the modern ways of spreading ideas and culture.

So if history before the 20<sup>th</sup> century is entirely inadequate for this task, then the 20<sup>th</sup> century forward will be the search area. Immediately the Cold War historical period presents itself as a perfect testing ground for this task. That era of modern history is characterized by two opposing blocks of power, three if we count the Non-aligned movement, with antagonistically oriented ideologies that were status quo and common sense within respective area of influence and dominance of each. On the one hand, we had the democratic and capitalist Western powers, which organized themselves into organizations such as NATO and European Economic Community, and their main opponent was the communist and socialist Eastern Block centered around the Soviet Union and militarily organized into the Warsaw Pact. Gramsci places an emphasis on formal and non-formal institutions in a country, regarding them as the most important agents of establishing a hegemonic culture within a society. Therefore, if there is a hegemonic culture, as defined by Gramsci, spanning multiple countries within a certain cultural or political bloc, then formal and informal institutions that are shared by those member states need to be identified to determine whether there really is such a hegemonic culture. Formal institutions within the Western cultural and political bloc include the aforementioned NATO whose mission was to guarantee the security of the member states and their democratic and market capitalist mode of being, so they formed themselves into a collective defensive alliance in order to represent a counter weight to the communist states and to contain the spread of communism. Then of course, there was a strong and continuous parliamentary and democratic tradition in most of the Western bloc states which was affirmed and reinforced by the intellectual academic elite that constantly added to the democratic theory and capitalist model of economy, all opposed to the socialist and Marxist Eastern bloc.

All of this largely held true for the Eastern bloc as well, which had the Warsaw pact to guarantee the security of socialist states, and a lively and strong intellectual class which aided the further development of socialist and communist ideology. Of particular note in this example is the fact that both the democratic capitalist and socialist communist ideologies were designed, communism perhaps more so than capitalism, as dialectically opposed to one another. A strong antagonistic force was at play between the two, which in a certain sense helped define each more firmly and thoroughly. Through this inimical relationship did the hegemonic cultures, in both Eastern bloc and the Western one, establish themselves strongly within the society. A common person in the West would always justify his or her way of life and democratic and capitalist ideology by pointing out the benefits of the Western order that stand directly in opposition towards the Eastern order. They would point out things such as higher

standard of living, freedom of speech, more moneymaking opportunities, lower poverty etc. all of which were absent in the East or reduced to a great extent. In similar fashion, a person living in the Eastern bloc would point out how his or her employment status was always secure, how the healthcare was always available and affordable, that social welfare system was more extensive, etc. and all these things were not as present in the West (with exceptions obviously).

These kinds of arguments and rhetoric firmly grounded their respective ideologies within the civil societies and it can be claimed that this was the perfect example of cultural hegemony manifesting itself, but not individually (in single countries that is) but collectively, as the arguments just mentioned were not necessarily related to the ideology or system of governance of a single country but instead to whole bloc of countries, so it is possible to see, perhaps for the first time in history, that hegemonic culture truly crossed borders and began to reproduce itself in many different societies at once and in a same form. It is worth to consider how the Western hegemonic culture has been more successful in its endeavor than the Eastern one was. Gramsci already criticized heavily the way in which the Soviets achieved power through violent means and this perhaps, through indirect means, led to the eventual collapse of communism in the Eastern bloc. Despite many among the eastern populations fervently supporting communism and socialist economies, many were disillusioned with the way the things were conducted and choose to run away from the Eastern bloc. John F. Kennedy made a statement in this regard, in a response to the Soviets erecting the Berlin Wall, saying that the West never had to do anything of this kind, as nobody wanted to run away from the Western countries and their way of life. This demonstrates perhaps how much stronger the cultural hegemony worked in the West than it did in the East. The reasons for this are not exactly apparent and clear, but it perhaps had to do with the already mentioned fact that the Soviet Union established socialism through violent means, and so it did in the rest of the Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. As soon as Gorbachev granted many important freedoms and liberties to the citizens of the Soviet Union, the system collapsed as nobody was being kept silent and prevented from criticizing the system of socialist planned economy and rule. When examining the reasons for the ultimate success of the Western model as opposed to the ultimate failure of the Eastern model, it is necessary to take into account the overwhelming superiority of the Western capitalist economic system in terms of providing a desirable material standard of living to Western citizens, as opposed to the relative economic poverty dominant in the East. When we compare the most desirable traits of capitalist versus command economies, it becomes apparent that one offers prosperity, while the latter provides predictability and stability. The outcome of the East-West struggle proves the preference for prosperity over predictability. As John F. Kennedy suggests in his comment about the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Eastern Bloc tried to prevent their citizens from 'voting with their feet' and fleeing into the West, 'the land of prosperity'.

However, one short period in history provided an incidental case study of what would have happened if history took a different course. Namely, during the period of the Great Depression in the United States, the scarcity of jobs, lack of opportunity for average working men to earn a

living, and widespread poverty that shook the nation instigated a noticeable emigration from the United States towards the Soviet Union. The prospect of full employment, steady jobs, free healthcare, free education, and state-provided housing seemed like an offer of paradise to the devastated working class. If we put this moment in history under a microscope and consider it separately from the overall historical context, it would seem that the Eastern concept is winning and that a culture offering stability and security is more desirable than that of opportunity. However, the ultimate course of events showed that as soon as the United States stabilized its economy and the 'American Dream' was reborn, the situation was reversed. The Western concept, which was based on the idea of constant movement, advancement, opportunities, and ultimately a more comfortable life, prevailed.

Now that the possibility of a regional hegemonic culture was tested and proven, it is time to take the analysis to the global level. As already stated, if there is a global hegemonic culture, that culture must be of political category, and it would specifically be democracy, understood as a general term and not a specific configuration or a sub-type of democracy. Democracy managed to spread around the world mainly through agency of the West that happens to be the hegemon of the world. A large number of countries in the world adopted the democratic style of government either by being strongly influenced by the Western powers and western political thought, such as in the case of Japan, or by being a colony of a western power and upon gaining independence inheriting and adopting a similar style of parliamentary democracy. It is hard to believe that all these different peoples with vastly different political cultures would all naturally opt for the democratic style of government suspiciously similar to the western one, so the idea that democracy is the only natural and viable ideology that appears to be false. The spread of democracy was also facilitated by the events of the two world wars, as at end of each fundamental changes took place and international organizations were created in order to guarantee and protect the rights and freedoms of countries and individuals in hopes of achieving a more peaceful world that would operate under the rule of law and consequently stabilize international relations and prevent more large scale wars.

The League of Nations was the first attempt of achieving this dream and it proved to be unsuccessful as the League failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War whose horrors led to a much more serious attempt of stabilizing the world, and it resulted in the creation of the United Nations. As previously mentioned, the UN was created in a democratic spirit which had a certain spillover effect upon the rest of the world, as the UN pretty much advocated for the world democracy by insisting on respect towards human rights, equality, liberty and so on, all of which are core democratic principles. All the member states were obliged to respect and adhere to these democratic principles or face the consequences. The UN was created under an informal patronage and guardianship of the Western powers, which were democratic, and the UN would probably be a different kind of organization if its patrons were authoritarian countries, and as a result of that, global hegemonic culture would probably not be a democracy. It is important to mention that Soviet Union also had a huge part in creating the UN and it successfully advocated for many socialist principles, such as the self-determination of

colonized peoples, but all of that needed to fit and be adapted to the already democratic framework of the United Nations and this fact testifies to the power that the Western powers had at that moment in history. During the Cold War, each bloc of power fiercely advocated for their own ideology and actively tried to subvert the credibility of opposing ideology. One needs to only remind themselves of the bloody wars that were fought on the Korean peninsula or in Vietnam to realize just how important and intense this ideological conflict was.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and subsequently the Eastern bloc, democracy of the West prevailed in this historical struggle for dominance. Now that the main opponent of the West was gone, democracy came to dominate the global political system and it became ubiquitous. Even China that claims to be a communist country has pretty much abandoned classical communism in favor of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and it refers to itself as a 'socialist consultative democracy'. Chinese example is worth looking at more carefully. China is a mighty country, a superpower in its own right. By some measurements, Chinese economy is already stronger than the American one and China certainly has enough political power to resist forces hostile to her. However, China still chooses to abide by the rules of the hegemon, the West, and calls itself a democracy that even has multiple parties in the National People's Congress, next to Chinese Communist Party of course which is in reality the only relevant one. There are as many as nine parties in the Chinese congress. But everybody is aware that China is not a democracy and cannot be considered one even by a long stretch. Popular elections in China are almost non-existent and severely limited to narrow local levels. So why does China bother to present itself as democracy, a multiparty democracy even? The answer lies in the practicality of having the multiparty democratic status. By claiming this title, China can pay the lip service to its critics who claim that there is no representation of diverse voices in the highest and most important state organs. When criticisms of that kind emerge, China simply points out to the eight other parties in congress that are there to mask the reality of lack of democracy in China. But why does China care about being perceived as democratic? Again, China is a superpower, by all accounts it really should not care so much about that. The fact that China cares, and she cares a lot, about criticisms such as these tells us a lot about the status the democracy enjoys in the current world. The pressure that West exerts upon the countries of the world is so immense that mighty China is forced to play a character on the world stage.

A similar situation can be noticed in the Russian example. Russia is de facto a one party state, with United Russia and Vladimir Putin leading the country, but the Russian Duma also has multiple parties in it, despite their presence being effectively irrelevant to the functioning of Russian society and state. To this day, the Western countries and organizations heavily advocate for more democracy around the world, and those countries that already are democracies are being measured as to how good their democracy really is based on scales such as the Freedom Index and many others. Democratic ideology pretty much became a part of the DNA of the global society as it is being diffused through social media, universities, non-governmental organizations and the intellectual academic class. Nobody is giving any serious



alternatives to the democratic system of governance and those that do are not taken seriously, and are shunned and ostracized.

However, there are a few cracks that begin to emerge when we try to argue that democracy truly is a global hegemonic culture. First of all, as already mentioned numerous times by now, Gramsci always emphasized the fact that cultural hegemony is established through subtle means and without force, and that the state is not responsible for the culture becoming hegemonic in character. But on the world stage and in the global society, the Western countries are doing the exact opposite. They are using passionate rhetoric to overtly promote democracy, and needlessly say they are responsible for that. This goes against what Gramsci is saying about cultural hegemony. This is by no means a subtle process for establishing democracy. It is quite aggressive in fact. It can be so aggressive to the point that the West willingly goes to war to bring 'democracy' to authoritarian countries, such as Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and many others. But there is also another important fact in the same vein of thought. The West does not actually care about democracy and it has proven that many times, especially the United States. Consider how the US government disposed of the democratically elected Chilean president Allende or how the Americans together with the British got rid of the democratically elected Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh when he planned to nationalize the Iranian oil industry which was in direct opposition to the Anglo-American economic interests.

The West largely acts as Rome did during its peak of power, as the West is bringing peace and 'civilization' largely through war and other barbaric means. Democracy is used only as a tool of domination and as an excuse for military intervention by the Western powers. Democracy in this sense truly is hegemonic, but if it is also a hegemonic culture as defined by Gramsci is becoming more and more questionable. If it is actually true that communism did not survive in the East precisely because it was implemented and also reinforced through violent means, such as during Stalin's rule, then it is also very likely that democracy will never truly take hold within the global society due to it being aggressively promoted by the West, and this especially holds true in countries that experienced a western military intervention to bring democracy to them. Afghanistan is the example of how not to bring democracy to a country, as the American military intervention only destabilized the country even further resulting in Talibans returning to power recently and ending the republic. The fact that democracy is apparently only used as a tool of domination can be correlated to the Wallerstein's World System theory that gives the West the title of the 'core' that exploits the peripheral countries. This exploitation can be facilitated by forcing democracy upon the peripheral countries that all score low on scales designed to assess the level of democracy in nations by measuring things such as corruption, liberty, press freedom, human development etc. As already mentioned, these scales work largely in favor of western countries and they are used against these peripheral nations in order to destabilize them and make them easier to control and exploit their work force and natural resources, which is exactly what the West does.

Another point of contention worth considering is the status of the dissidents that do not subscribe to the hegemonic culture in the global society. Let us have a look at the curious case of North Korea. The official name of the country popularly known as North Korea is actually the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is crystal clear to anyone that North Korea is not a democracy despite what they may claim in their official name. Despite the fact that North Korea claims a democratic status, it is not a part of global society and is in fact an outcast. This case actually does fit in well with Gramsci's theory, because it is irrelevant what North Korea claims its culture is, North Korea is not a democracy, and we claim that democracy is a hegemonic culture, so if North Korea does not ardently follow this hegemonic culture she is pushed to the margins of society and becomes an outcast, which is exactly what happened with North Korea in real life.

But to complicate things further, another pressing issue that needs to be addressed is the status of Arab kingdoms. Kingdoms such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and others are by no means democracies and they do not even claim that they are. If there is global hegemonic cultural within the global society, then it would be logical to assume that Arab peninsular kingdoms, who have a consistent and long continuous record of disrespecting human rights, are on the margins of global society. And that is exactly what they are not. Oil and natural gas rich Arab kingdoms are important players on the world stage precisely because of the strategically important natural resources they possess and sell to everyone on the globe, their main business partners being precisely the hegemonic Western countries. Of course, Arab kingdoms are heavily criticized by the global society for their repressive governance and general disregard for human rights. But criticisms of those kind are echoed by the Western governments in a lip-service manner, as the West is so entangled in its narrative to promote democracy that the West is forced to at least formally criticize the Arab kingdoms. In reality the West does not benefit from cutting economic ties to the peninsular kingdoms or imposing sanctions upon them as that would heavily hurt the western economies as the recent Russian sanctions did. Once again, criteria are not being met that would prove the existence of the global hegemonic culture.

However, perhaps these arguments that point away from the existence of the global hegemonic culture might not be so clear cut. One of the biggest reasons why hegemonic culture might not exist on the global level is because the hegemonic West is aggressively advocating for democracy, and Gramsci's theory claims that cultural hegemony is achieved in a subtle manner. But if we look at history it becomes apparent that this fact does not immediately disqualify global cultural hegemony from existence. All throughout history did political elites strongly argue in favor of the current dominant ideology and were heavily opposed to the ideology that was positioned in opposition to the status quo. After the success of the French revolution, for example, the other European monarchies began strongly criticizing this new French republic as it presented a direct threat to their own power and rule. The monarchs began to fear their own people as they very well could have been inspired by the French example and revolt against the monarchies. So the aggressive behavior and promotion of monarchy as the ideal state

arrangement was warranted and needed to preserve the status quo. The institution of monarchy was still a hegemonic culture despite these aggressive methods of promoting it.

A second big argument that has been raised here against the hegemonic culture existing on a global level was the privileged status of the Arab kingdoms within the global society, while Gramsci's theory argues that the Arab kingdoms should be naturally banished from the most important social circles on a global level. But the reality of politics is far from simple. Economy and money are things that actually matter in politics, and it can be argued that a strong economy is end goal of politics. The materialist view of history, the view that all of history is just a big class struggle between the rich and the poor and that countries are in conflict with each other in order to gain or preserve their strong economies, is precisely a communist interpretation of world history. So when we see the West cooperating with the Arab kingdoms for financial reason we should hardly be surprised. Alliances with factions that have opposing ideologies are hardly a novelty and history is full of instances such as these and yet hegemonic cultures still remained within states. The question also worth asking is how actually important the Arab kingdoms are. Economically they are without question of extreme prominence but when we consider their relatively small number one wonders if they really can cancel the whole theory of cultural hegemony out.

Another aspect worth considering is the actual extent of Western dominance. Without a doubt, the West is world hegemon and that fact is proven everyday through western soft power as well as political and economic might. However, the West is not all powerful. If democracy is the most popular ideology, to the point of omnipresence, because of the Western influence and advocacy, the question worth asking is whether democracies around the world would disappear if the political bloc of the West would suddenly collapse, just like communism did when the Soviet Union collapsed. This point in history is not the same as the Cold War. The whole world is characterized as being democratic and that democracy is stemming from the West, but despite that the whole world is not the West. Is there any guarantee that the democracies would collapse and disappear if the West were to collapse and disappear, as the most of the world countries are not part of the West? The answer is probably not, as the West really does not exercise influence to that pervasive extent. Democracies in all likelihood would probably survive the collapse of the West, and if some countries really did change their style of government, they likely would be few in between.

This fact does point out towards the direction global hegemonic culture probably existing and functioning independently of the hegemon (the West). Democratic tradition became too ingrained inside the global political thought to be simply disposed off when the democratic hegemon disappears. There has been too much intellectual and emotional investment into democracy for the past couple of decades to easily disregard Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony but applied on a global level as being irrational. But it also cannot be claimed with full confidence that global hegemonic culture really does exist due to muddied waters and complexity of global society.

## Conclusion

Throughout this discussion, it has been argued that this subject is much more complex than originally thought. It was suggested that indeed there exists now a brand new global society, fundamental novelty of this era of history, and that this society has its very own hegemon in the form of the broadly defined West. The task to apply Gramsci's definition of the cultural hegemony upon the global level also proved to be much more difficult. The reasons for this are multiplex. As mentioned previously, Gramsci only examined the process of cultural hegemony within singular societies and not on a global level. So if anyone tries to apply his theory of cultural hegemony to many different countries at once, naturally certain difficulties will be encountered and the theory would have to be adapted in order to superimpose it globally, but then that theory is no longer Gramsci's and we miss the aim of the original task.

On the same train of thought, when considering the global society and how it functions some fundamental issues arise that cannot be easily overcome with slight manipulation of the theory. Firstly, despite the society being global, this is a fairly recent phenomenon that perhaps has not fully manifested itself. There are many important differences between different societies that still successfully differentiate them from each other, despite the effects of globalization. Languages, culture, tradition, politics, economy, geography, all of these things keep people separate and different to an important extent. Globalization did indeed overcome some aspects of these elements but just enough for us to be able to observe an infantile version of global society and not a fully developed adult. It is not even certain from the philosophical or sociological standpoint if the 'adult' version of global society can even scientifically exist. In such an 'adult' global society, the whole world would most likely speak the same language and have the same traditions. Only then would it be possible to identify a global hegemonic culture without any alterations to the theory. Another barrier to a global hegemonic culture being a reality also relates to the fact that global society is experiencing its infancy currently, and that barrier is the fact that Gramsci referred to intellectuals who advocate the hegemonic culture and the intellectuals who advocate the revolutionary and controversial ideas as single persons and not as whole countries. He did mention those intellectuals being part of a whole class, a group of people, but that is not the same as a whole country with much more complex social dynamics than the class within a society.

The reason why this is important is the fact that psychology of an individual fundamentally changes when in a group. Gramsci explained the dynamics between individuals and classes within a society and how these dynamics lead to a hegemonic culture, so it would not be possible to apply those same dynamics to the global level, where the only relevant actors are the states. Assuming that states act the same way the individuals or classes within a society do would be simply incorrect. States are entities that are much more complex than the classes and individuals are, so it is not possible to presuppose that states will act the same way classes and people do, and that the cultural hegemony will be established in the same manner that it is established within singular societies. From standpoint of psychology, this task to apply cultural

hegemony globally is also futile and impossible. Realist theories of international relations also suffer from the same problem as they are heavily based upon the writings of Thomas Hobbes who theorized a hypothetical 'state of nature' that preexisted the state, and in which there was no law or organizations that would stop the violence occurring in this hypothetical historical period. Realist theories rely on this concept of the 'state of nature' to describe how the world functions and why the states go into conflict so often, as there is no superior above them to regulate their behavior, and in that way they explain power politics. But this theory is also flawed because it is not possible to claim that states possess the same psychological behavior that individuals do, so explanations such as these are fundamentally flawed.

Despite the case for global hegemonic culture being weak, that is not to say that there is no global 'dominant' culture. It is clear from the previous chapters that such a dominant culture exist in the service of the global hegemon, which is the West, and that culture is most definitely democracy. The West uses democracy to solidify its own strategic position in the world and in that regard democracy really is a culture that facilitates the process of exploitation on the behalf of the hegemon. Having that in mind, another discussion that is opened up by this process of domination is the question whether it really ultimately matters whether countries arrive at democracy the 'natural' way without foreign interference or by agency from outside forces. A good example of this is the Roman civilization. Rome took Greek culture and adopted it as its own, giving it certain characteristics to distinguish it enough from the Greeks. Mythology, culture and political thought was adapted to Roman standards and Rome never suffered from this in any way. Rome went to become the most influential country in history and the foreign culture that it adopted had never hindered Rome in its endeavors, it quite possibly aided it. To be fair, Rome adopted Greek culture upon its volition so it could not be expected that a foreign culture could harm Rome. What about the cases where a foreign culture is adopted but with a little more aggression acting as a motivating factor? The perfect case for this is Japan, that has a significantly different political culture than the West does, and yet Japan, through immense pressure by the West, arrived to the position that it hold today as a multiparty democracy - one with an exceptionally good economy and technological prowess. If we are to simplify the facts of life, and measure objective goodness by economic performance, Japan adopting a foreign culture appears not to have ever hindered its development. It is important to note that in these two examples, both nations adapted the foreign culture for their own needs and values. That is probably why it was never a problem that they had adopted a culture that was not their own. In many cases around the world democracy is not adapted enough to specific needs of the countries in question. Good example of this are the African countries that pretty much all have ethnically diverse populations, to such a severe degree that in Nigeria there are over 500 recognized languages and Nigeria is not alone in this regard. Nonetheless, African democracies have not made any significant changes to the regular democratic formula in order to accurately accommodate all the needs of such different peoples. For this and many other reasons not necessarily related to democracy, African countries are suffering.

Indeed, there is a dominant culture in the service of the hegemon, but we cannot fit this dominant culture within the framework of the Gramscian hegemonic culture. The barriers for that task are too big to overcome. Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony cannot be applied to the global level due to many dissimilarities between an individual society and global society. There indeed should be another attempt at providing an explanation on how the dominant culture of democracy reproduces itself on a global level, as it definitely does, but the contours of that theory can at the present time only be guessed at. Nonetheless, Gramsci's work can serve as an inspiration for further discussions on this subject matter.

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