

CHAOS, FEAR AND HEGEMONY – NEW AND OLD IN INTERNATIONAL ORDER

I would like to propose a three-level hypothesis.

It suggests, first, that current chaotic international order is a consequence of unsolved structural contradictions that are providing dynamism to the system but simultaneously increase its anarchic nature.

Secondly, I will argue, that consequence of those contradictions is a systemic FEAR that becomes a stimulus for transformation and that rather than fear acting as an expedient but *ad hoc* political *tool*, it has become the *de facto* essence of politics. Fear now provides the impetus and reason for politics, substituting other sources of legitimation of power such as democracy, justice, and the common good.

Thirdly, in conclusion, I will argue, that reaction to that FEAR take form of re-inventing hegemonies at the regional and global levels, involving state and non-state actors with the powerful consequences for the national state.

A note on methodology of the first part: our methodology is based on the dialectical method of inquiry on social analysis: the action, reaction and synthesis; or thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The idea is not new. It was proposed by Hegel and later developed by Joachim Fichte to the point of practical implementation in social inquiry. I would like to show you the process, anti-process and the synthesis that may come out of the complex interaction between two contradictory processes.

I. The five contradictions of the world system.

Hegemony VS multipolarity

The first contradiction is a fundamental one. It's the "hegemony versus multipolarity" contradiction, which obviously causes the international system to change. The future world order will be somehow formed by the end of this struggle. On the one side of this struggle, there are the US and its allies, on the other side, there are the others. The hegemon, naturally, strives to maintain its hegemony. We are not giving a moral or ethical assessment to it. The hegemon always wants to keep the hegemony in order to secure better life conditions, clearer future and better stability for its citizens, so hegemon or hegemony cannot be called morally or ethically wrong. The problem is that keeping the hegemony is almost impossible in current world order, and therefore the hegemony has to

engage in a contradiction with multipolarity, represented by the others. Clearly, the pair of “we versus others” will shape the next years of the world order.

By seeing this struggle it is not difficult to spot the contradiction of “the US + the European Union” (US hegemony with conditional support of EU) versus “Chinese economic challenges and Russian geo-security challenge”. As you know, last year China’s GDP reached the level of that of the US. It does not demonstrate the quality of life in China or the US, but this definitely became the final warning signal to the US, that something is going on.

So, what is the reaction of the hegemon to these processes? The hegemon is reacting in the form of inventing new tools, which have not been known yet, in order to maintain its hegemony. The US have come up with a network of agreements, negotiated for the last six to ten years, called “T-treaty trinity”: Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP - 12 countries), Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP with EU). President Trump has been trying to block some of these projects, but in fact, the negotiations are going on. We even think, that Trump’s administration is likely to make certain progress in these negotiation processes.

These US projects are all about capturing key positions, using institutional and normative framework, to maintain the hegemonic position of the US and the Europe. It is interesting, that if this happens, 2/3 of the global GDP will be under those agreements. It means that for the years to come a different type of hegemony, not military, not even economic, will create a new world order. The interesting fact is that in neither of those agreements China is presented. Russia is not included wither. In fact, BRICS countries are excluded from those agreements. It’s a serious signal, showing the existence of “we versus others” contradiction, where those, who are not subordinated to “our rules”, will be excluded from crucial normative and institutional frameworks, that will shape the future.

Globalization VS identity politics

The second contradiction shaping our future is the “Globalization (universalization) versus identity politics” (autonomization of identities, which will lead later to the radicalization of identities) contradiction. One of the main characteristics of globalization is the universalization of norms, culture, behaviour, institutions, system of management and commodification of social relations. The main idea of globalization is to make the economic system going smoother, working better and more efficient, but universalization of behaviour and norms is obviously much simpler. To have one pattern instead of dealing with certain

patterns, one solution instead of certain solutions is much simpler. Therefore, universalization is one of the key elements to the current stage of globalization.

At the same time, people do not like to lose their own identity, their own culture, customs, religion, history. Therefore, the reaction to universalization is the identity politics, emerging in different forms: religious aspects, serious gender aspects, ethnic aspect, and so on.

Identity politics is not a new process, but we are entering a new phase of this process, in which the politics become dependent on identity. Politics react more and more to the identity struggle, class struggle, cultural struggle, many other forms of identity, and finally becomes based on identity groups. These identity groups are mushrooming, pressing on the state to deliver what they think is their own right. These are groups, political parties or social movements, that can be based on culture, religion, social class or caste, culture, dialect, disability, education, ethnicity, language, nationality, sex, gender identity, generation, occupation, profession, race, political party affiliation, sexual orientation, settlement, urban and rural habitation, and veteran status.

In other words, the new identity politics is emerging instead of the larger socially based interest groups, as groups are becoming narrower and narrower. Since the state cannot react to every identity group interests, some of these groups start radicalizing. They think, “If I cannot get what I want, I should be more vocal, more radical, because then the state will listen and then the state will react”.

Therefore, the next big struggle is that between identity politics and universalization, which will have consequences for the state policies and state behaviour: the weaker the state, the more it is prone to react to identity politics. The state is no longer reacting to social needs; the state is reacting to the needs of identity groups, which changes the whole dimension of state-to-citizen reaction.

This will obviously lead to more social protests, because the more radical the groups, the more visible they are. This can lead to imbalances between the state and interest groups. A classical case are pensioner identity groups globally, as result of which some states “are paying more attention to pensioners than to the children”. If you look at the EU statistics, you will see one interesting thing: right now, the social spending is lowering every year, with the exception of the pensioners. The children are getting less for health care, while the pensioners are getting more for health care every year in the EU. This is a dangerous notion, indeed.

Wealth versus Poverty

The third contradiction is the “Wealth versus Poverty” contradiction. Some basic facts from the World Bank show, that out of an estimated 7.4 billion people on earth, 1.1 billion people live below the poverty level, which is below \$1.25 a day; another 2.7 billion live on less than \$2 a day. This means, that about 40% of our planet lives beyond the poverty level. The point here is well shown in the book by French economist Thomas Piketty called “Capital in the Twenty-First Century”. His main point is that capital tends to reproduce itself. This is not a new idea, Marks was also talking about this. But Piketty is showing that there is a certain *oligarchization* of capital, which means, that inherited capital has the tendency to grow exponentially and at the expense of other social groups.

Piketty’s book was followed by the Oxfam Poverty Report (2017), prepared for the conference in Davos. The report shows, that eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people, who make up the poorest half of humanity. This is shocking not in moral or ethical terms, but in terms of its possible consequences.

The consequences of this increasing inequality include the following:

1. The influence of democracy: usually we think that one vote corresponds to one person, but now it’s increasingly clear, that this democratic theatre is changing into “one dollar = one vote”. We have witnessed two of the most expensive elections in the history of mankind. As Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler showed in their book “Capital as power”, capital is becoming political power. They put a lot of economic evidence to show the direct link between capital and political power.
2. Tax avoidance: Superrich are avoiding taxes, because they are capable of keeping their profits in tax heavens. This is an important point, because paying taxes is vital to maintain social stability in countries, which then turn those taxes into social and security benefits. If you’re not paying taxes, this means, that those aspects of the state protection will inevitably be diminished.
3. Global control over the labour market: as a consequence, we have a huge struggle to have minimum payment per hour in most countries, including North America. Statistics show that 300.000.000 people work without minimum payment guarantees. This is manipulation of wages on global scale, not only manipulation of politics.

To sum up, if there is a process of commodification of democracy, this will lead to the end of the myth of the liberal order. This is dangerous for those, who live in this myth of having some influence on the politics and the myth, that their vote means something.

The state VS the market

The fourth contradiction is an old one, between the state and the market. Economists and politicians hold a sinusoidal type of approach towards this key issue: how the state and the market are cooperating or not cooperating, and what are supposed to be the relations between them; whether the state should lead the development or the market should be responsible for the development. In other words, whether the state is supposed to be in charge of our well-being or the market should create conditions for our well-being.

This contradiction is sinusoidal, because some claim, following the *keynesian* way, that the state should lead the market. The biggest projects of 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and so on, like socialism, are based on this idea, and fascism is based on this idea of state leading the market, too. And then you have the 1970's and 1980's, when the neo-liberal economic order is starting to dominate, and therefore the market is to be the main stimulus for development or wealth. In fact, neither of these models worked. The crisis in 2007-2008 showed, that neither market nor the state alone can deliver what they are promising. Therefore, we lose the trust both in state and in market. This means we trust no one, not even banks, that are now paying huge fines for manipulating the market during the crisis.

This leads to the point, that entrepreneurs themselves lose the trust in their own system. Our book shows, that the solution for the future could be a dual parallel system of the state and the market, where the state plays the role of the corporate insurance company for the nascent productive forces, helping them in order to maintain their market position withstanding competition. This is not the same as the import substitution strategy, because the latter means that the state is helping the market indefinitely. What is going to happen is that the state will base on the corporative advantage of certain sections of the industry, helping them until they become the world leaders to compete. This is the case of China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea. Therefore, there is no longer a debate between the market and the state. The debate is about how deep and in which way these should cooperate in order to maintain the market shared in the global scale and the national level.

The problem is, that if we would like the state to cooperate with the market, we need the state to be relatively strong, which is not the case. The states cannot withstand the pressure of globalization. They become weaker and weaker. The wave of neo-liberalism led to the privatization of many state services. Then what is the role of the state in protecting our interests as citizens? Nothing, almost nothing. And if the state cannot protect the interests of its citizens than the state apparatus is

no longer needed. Why do we need political parties and parliaments, if they cannot produce politics?

This debate between the market and the state is not only about economic forces. It's about the shape of the future of our political system. We are transforming into consumers. The last twenty years saw a phenomenal boom in capital forces. People were earning a lot of money, they had cheap commodities, they started transforming into consumers. We are no longer needed for the market as citizens, because as citizens we would like to make our own choices, not imposed on us. The problem is, that these two processes are not compatible: the more we are consumers, the less we are citizens.

Power VS politics

The fifth contradiction, which follows up the previous one, is “power versus politics”. Power is currently in process of being separated from politics. Power is the ability to fix things, to deliver, to make things happen. Politics is the process of selecting choices for the power to implement. Politics is about whether we need a school or a swimming pool, whether we need more spending on army or schools or hospitals. And then those needs are transferred to the power via parliament process, and the power tries to implement them. So, there is a link between politics and power: politics comes first, power comes later.

Now this system is clearly collapsing, because there is less and less power in the hands of the state. Because of privatization and globalization certain state prerogatives are located somewhere else. The money is located somewhere else, therefore the power is outside the national state. So the role of the state is changing, but then the state cannot cooperate with the market the way the market would expect it to do. Therefore, the market is more dependent on external forces, than on the forces located in the national state. As a result of these processes, the power and politics are separating almost to the point, that they are living two independent lives.

In practice this means, that politicians and state machines are living more autonomously than before. They create a shell in which they are somehow living their own small lives, which are very much detached from what we would like them to be doing. We call it “autonomization of politics”. When you ask a politician why he does something not wise or not rational, the answer is “because I can”. The state is creating its own reality. The “autonomization of politics” may lead to interesting political consequences, as the worst conflicts will not depend on “national interests” but on the autonomous decisions of the leadership.

II. Fear as substitute for politics.

It is time for elaborating the second part of my hypothesis. Secondly, I will argue, that consequence of those contradictions is a systemic FEAR that becomes a stimulus for transformation and that rather than fear acting as an expedient but *ad hoc* political tool, it has become the *de facto* essence of politics. Fear now provides the impetus and reason for politics, substituting other sources of legitimation of power such as democracy, justice, and the common good. For this part of the presentation key argument is that *fear as politics* has a *transformational capacity to change politics, norms and institutions*.

My argument is that rather than simply seeing the most recent exercise of a “politics of fear,” (Trump, migrants) our contemporary moment is distinguished by the emergence of “fear as politics”. I argue that rather than fear acting as an expedient but *ad hoc* political tool, it has become the *de facto* essence of politics. Fear now provides the impetus and reason for politics, substituting other sources of legitimation of power such as democracy, justice, and the common good. If we accept Zygmunt Bauman’s proposition that “politics is the ability to decide which things are to be done and given priority”¹ then three conclusions follow.

Fear provides key input to the “ability to decide” as politicians use fear as pre-condition necessary to make decisions (“we have to do that because of immigrants, Muslims, etc.”). Fear also provides selection criteria “for things to be done”. For instance, instead of environment or education policy priorities would include fear sensitive area such as security, race relations or employment. Finally – fear contributes to the content of “things to be done” (for instance, if we fear immigrants then content of the immigration policy will be quite restrictive to the newcomers).

Key policy areas such as migration², safety and security³, labor market⁴, development⁵, race⁶, democracy⁷, international relations⁸, environment⁹ health and

¹ Zygmunt Bauman in conversation with Vincent Della Sala. *Re-create the social state*. see: Piotr Dutkiewicz and Richard Sakwa (eds.). 22 Ideas to Fix the World. Conversations with the World's Foremost Thinkers. New York University Press. 2013. p.189.

² Jef Huysmans. *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*. Routledge. 2006.

³ Frank Furedi. *Fear and Security: A Vulnerability-led Policy Response*. Volume 42. Issue 6. December 2008. pp. 645-661.

⁴ David G. Blanchflower, Chris Shadforth. *Fear, Unemployment and Migration*. Vol. 119. Issue 535. February 2009. pp.136- 182

⁵ *An Economy for the 99%*. OXFAM Report. January 2017.

https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf

⁶ See, for instance: Paula Ioanide. *The Emotional Politics of Racism*. *Stanford Studies in Comparative Race and Ethnicity*. 2015.

well-being by now are fear-driven (either by attempts to address fear or using it to legitimate further empowerment of elites).

A journey from the “Politics of fear” to “Fear as politics”

For Corey Robin fear is an existential, collective state of mind that reveals a “deep truth about who we are, as political agents, as people, as a people”.¹⁰ In fact, under the surface, people across the globe seem to be on edge and it seems that no region is spared from a collective anxieties rooted in economic and political uncertainties, social dislocations and security threats of all kinds and intensities. In Europe, for instance, to deal with migration and economic turbulence, the political landscape (by the growth of populism and movement to the right of many mainstream parties) is quickly changing with destabilizing consequences¹¹. In the USA, the feeling that old norms of political behaviour and institutional structures shall be challenged became a political platform for the new president¹². In fast-growing Asia the anxiety with “catching up with the West” creates all sorts of social, political and ecological contradictions making regional powers less confident about the future¹³. In Africa there are just a few countries that record economic growth and social stability amid political chaos¹⁴. Our point is that fear is no longer confined to one country or region; it is globalized.

Dangers have always existed, Zygmunt Bauman argues, but today things are different. He suggests that we live in a state of "continuous uncertainty, which makes us afraid"¹⁵ and adds “Now, [...] People find themselves uneasy, lost, incapable of acting with certainty, with assurance

⁷ [Jim Sleeper](http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/05/12/is-tyranny-around-the-corner/a-history-of-unwarranted-fears-of-tyranny). A History of Unwarranted Fears of Tyranny.

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/05/12/is-tyranny-around-the-corner/a-history-of-unwarranted-fears-of-tyranny>

⁸ Raymond Taras. Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy. Edinburgh University Press. March 2015.

⁹ Environmental activists fear ‘climate progress is dead’ after Trump takes U.S. election. [Karl Ritter And Seth Borenstein, The Associated Press](http://www.associatedpress.com). November 9. 2016 2:10 PM ET.

¹⁰ He also adds to this argument that, “The politics of fear doesn’t mean a politics that points to or invokes or even relies on threats, real or false. It doesn’t mean a politics that is emotive (what politics isn’t?) or paranoid. It means something quite different: a politics that is [grounded](#) on fear, that takes [inspiration and meaning](#) from fear, that sees in fear a wealth of experience and a layer of profundity that cannot be found in other experiences”. Corey Robin. Against the Politics of Fear. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/12/against-politics-fear-trump-republicans-organizing-change/>

¹¹ The Rise of Populist Extremism in Europe. Chatham House report.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/media/news/view/178303#sthash.iipNi7ot.dpuf>

¹² Gersh Kuntzman. A Trump presidency means Americans can forget all political norms going forward. New York Daily News. Wednesday, November 9. 2016. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/president-trump-means-no-political-norms-america-article-1.2865226>

¹³ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2016/apd/eng/areo0516.htm>

¹⁴ The Economic Development in Africa Report 2016: *Debt Dynamics and Development Finance in Africa*. UNCTAD http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/aldcafrica2016_en.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2016/07/zygmunt-bauman-world-crisis-humanity-160722085342260.html> (accessed 8 March. 2017)

Fear has an ability to become a tool that transforms state policies, making them more “fear sensitive” (i.e. *fearization* of immigration policies, securitization of ethnic relations, re-introduction of trade barriers or increased public surveillance for instance). This however, does not yet, constitute what we call *fear as politics*. This is just a new incarnation of an old political strategy of using fear as handy tool in influencing voters. To advance our argument to the new level we need to look at fear from a different perspective. For this paper’s key argument that *fear as politics* has a *transformational capacity to change politics, norms and institutions*, we find Bauman’s concept of “liquid fear” well suited in explaining fear’s new political capacities acquired with the rise and fall of globalization. Let us briefly reconstruct his approach.

"Liquid fear," Bauman explains, "means fear flowing on our own court, not staying in one place but diffuse. And the trouble with liquid fear, unlike the concrete specific danger which you know and are familiar with, is that you don't know where from it will strike. [...]. There are no solid structures around us all on which we can rely, in which we can invest our hopes and expectations. Even the most powerful governments, very often, cannot deliver on their promise. They don't have enough power to do so".¹⁶

What has brought us to this situation that, across the whole social and political spectrum of our societies, we feel - individually and collectively - insecure, uncertain about the future, quite impotent to face challenges, and unable to be in control. Our answer is threefold: 1) loss of trust in both state and market, 2) divorce of power from politics and 3) deepening (followed by radicalization) of the social divide along a whole spectrum of cleavages (mostly based on inequalities, ideology, identity and power). Thus, fear is becoming systemic (omnipresent) as it is present in every facet of our life and - simultaneously – in key institutions to cope with its roots (such as, for instance, socially supportive state agencies, trade unions, service providers, NGO’s) are either no longer available or their capacity diminished.

It seems that we have entered a period of strategic instability, in which we lost most of the defensive mechanisms against frivolousness of the market and repressiveness of the state. Citizens are, step by step in recent twenty years, stripped from the protective layers of the social (or welfare) state. Waves of privatisations stripped the state of most prerogatives that made them attractive to

¹⁶ Zygmunt Bauman. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2016/07/zygmunt-bauman-world-crisis-humanity-160722085342260.html> (8 March. 2017)

their citizens¹⁷. It is a mistake, however, to think that fear is the lower and middle class phenomenon of being uncertain, confused and defenseless. Same is the case of the upper classes. As Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler concluded in their study of capital.”¹⁸

We see rise of populism in Europe, US, Asia and Latin America¹⁹. “Supporters of PEPs [*Populist Extremist parties – italics ours*] are often dismissed as political protestors, single-issue voters or economically deprived ‘losers of globalization’ - writes Matthew Goodwin in a Chatham House report on populist extreme right - “The most successful parties have rallied a coalition of economically insecure lower- middle-class citizens and skilled and unskilled manual workers. [...] But all of their supporters share one core feature: their profound hostility towards immigration, multiculturalism and rising cultural and ethnic diversity²⁰. Providing this one, most recent, example from a pool of evidence²¹ we are making a point that additionally to the loss of trust and divorce of power from politics, fear- based politics is entering traditional domains of politics via political parties and electoral politics. That suggest to us a “normalization” of fear in the mainstream politics.

III. State and non-state actors’ responses: re- hegemonization of world politics

How can hegemony be established and sustained in world politics today?

Hegemony: What Is It?

Hegemony combines: (a) concentrated control of material resources; (b) leadership in setting societal rules; and (c) mindsets which convince people that the dominant power rules in their interests. So, crucially, hegemony involves legitimacy, whereby the dominated embrace their domination.

Hegemony is relevant to world politics as well as local and national arenas. Much of modern society involves significant cross-border flows: for example, of goods,

¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman. Archipelago of exceptions. 2005. <http://www.publicspace.org/ca/text-biblioteca/eng/b015-archipelago-of-exceptions> (accessed 19 March. 2017)

¹⁸ Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan. Systemic Fear, Modern Finance and the Future of Capitalism. Jerusalem and Montreal. July 2010. <http://bnarchives.net/>

¹⁹ Adam Taylor. *The global wave of populism that turned 2016 upside down*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/12/19/the-global-wave-of-populism-that-turned-2016-upside-down/?utm_term=.89cd7b6968e9 (accessed 19 March. 2017).

²⁰ *The Rise of Populist Extremism in Europe*. Chatham House report. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/178301>

²¹ See: F. J. Dionne. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-politics-of-fear-is-gripping-democracies-across-the-world/2016/12/04/2de10712-b8c8-11e6-959c-172c82123976_story.html?utm_term=.1d6956e28049 *Don't play identity politics! The primal scream of the straight white male*. Hadley Freeman, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/02/identity-politics-donald-trump-white-men> *Identity Politics and Racism: Some Thoughts and Questions*. Elliott batTzedek. <http://feminist-reprise.org/library/resistance-strategy-and-struggle/identity-politics-and-racism-some-thoughts-and-questions/>

knowledge, money, people, pollutants, and violence. Like social relations within countries, transboundary connections attract governance: that is, regimes which aim to bring regularity, predictability, and controlled change to society. When world ordering is achieved through legitimated rule by dominant power, we can say that international or global hegemony is in play.

Where Does World Hegemony Lie?

Different theories offer different propositions about what kind of dominant power can achieve hegemony in world politics. For instance, liberalist and realist theories of international relations argue that hegemony lies with a dominant state. In this case a particular territorial government controls a preponderance of material resources, sponsors international regimes, and promotes values and visions that have deep appeal beyond its borders. These approaches usually identify Britain and the USA as hegemonic states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively. Many liberals and realists also ponder whether China is destined to be the next hegemonic state.

In contrast, neo-Gramscian theories locate world hegemony in global capitalism and a transnational capitalist class. From this perspective, dominant rule-making power for world order lies with surplus accumulation and its main agents, such as multinational corporations, core states (the G7/G20), global governance institutions, and orthodox think-tanks. For neo-Gramscians, hegemonic forces promote the legitimated rule of capital on a global scale, whereas the counter-hegemonic forces of various resistance movements (e.g. of landless peasants and urban poor) seek to delegitimize and dismantle the dominant power of global capital.

For poststructuralist theories, hegemony in world politics resides with a ruling knowledge frame (variously called a 'discourse' or an 'episteme'). In this conception, supreme power in world society lies with a certain language and consciousness. Poststructuralists often identify Enlightenment rationality as the hegemonic knowledge regime of modernity, as produced through science, education, mass communications, and so on. Many such theorists also highlight neoliberal governmentality (with its discourse of market civilisation) and securitisation (with its discourse of risk) as more specific variants of Enlightenment knowledge that rule world politics today. Hegemony arises inasmuch as subjects willingly underwrite these reigning mindsets as truth.

For post-colonialist theories, hegemony in world politics is a question of embracing (or counter-hegemonically resisting) the dominance of western imperialism and associated social hierarchies of class, gender, geography, race,

religion, and sexuality. Imperial hegemony classically operated through colonial rule by one state over external territories. Nowadays neo-colonial rule occurs through ‘independent’ states in league with outside forces such as donor governments, multilateral institutions, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). Again, the hegemonic quality of the dominance entails that (neo-) colonially subordinated subjects believe that imperial power exerts rightful rule over them: e.g. when people of colour internalise racism. On the other hand, counter-hegemony arises for post-colonialists when social movements (of indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+, women, etc.) challenge empire.

In sum, multiple readings of hegemony in world politics are available.

How Is World Hegemony Practiced?

In addition to elaborating different conceptions of hegemony in world politics, there are various techniques that hegemonic forces can deploy to secure their legitimated rule. How is world hegemony made and sustained? And by what means can counter-hegemonic forces contest it?

Different presentations highlighted different kinds of instruments of hegemony, often reflecting their theoretical orientation. Thus, Sloan from a realist perspective focused on the tools of war. Geiger in a liberal vein highlighted international organisations as vehicles for world hegemony. Germain on neo-Gramscian lines concentrated on money. Chebankova with poststructuralist inclinations emphasised the role of ideas. Parashar with a post-colonialist approach accentuated subaltern struggle.

Yet, rather than assemble a long disjointed list of particular tools, perhaps one can helpfully distinguish several broad categories of (counter-) hegemonic practices in world politics. A fourfold typology of material, discursive, institutional, and performative techniques can be suggestive in this regard. The distinctions are drawn for analytical convenience, of course: the four aspects tend to overlap and combine in concrete actions.

1. With material practices, dominant power in world society deploys economic resources to obtain legitimate rule. These resources can be directly tangible, such as raw materials, manufacturing industries, and military forces. Money and finance can also figure crucially, as witnessed by the hegemonic use of the US dollar, bank loans, overseas ‘aid’, and so on. Nowadays the material aspect of hegemony further involves controlling – and setting rules around – the digital economy of data and images.

2. With discursive practices, hegemony secures legitimated dominance in world politics through the use of language and meaning. Willing subordination is achieved with semantic signifiers (e.g. ‘community’, ‘democracy’ and ‘justice’) that construct the supreme force to be good. Similarly, narratives (e.g. of ‘transparency’, ‘development’ and ‘security’) spin positive storylines to legitimate a structure of domination, as do hegemonic accounts of history. In short, hegemonic discourses construct consciousness (‘regimes of truth’) in which the dominated genuinely believe that their domination is a good thing.
3. With institutional practices, hegemonic forces establish and control the organizational apparatuses that generate the rules of legitimated domination. On the one hand, these mechanisms include bodies that formulate and administer official rules (on local, national, regional and global scales). On the other hand, world hegemony operates through more informally governing institutions such as civil society organisations, foundations, and think tanks which figure centrally in the production of ruling discourses.
4. With performative practices, world hegemony is secured through certain behaviours and rituals. For example, states perform their hegemony with flag ceremonies, commemorative monuments, national holidays, and military parades. Finance capital demonstrates its hegemony with clusters of glittering skyscrapers that dominate the centres of global cities. Modern science affirms its hegemony *inter alia* with conference routines, academic prizes, and graduation rites. Counter-hegemony, too, has its performances with street marches, dissident art, and so on.

As suggested earlier, hegemony in world affairs is generally achieved through these four types of practices in combination. Whether hegemony lies with state, capital, knowledge, empire or whatever, it establishes and sustains itself through a mix of material, discursive, institutional, and performative techniques. None of the four is sufficient by itself. For example, to control the rule-making institutions a hegemonic force needs command of resources, narratives, and rituals. Likewise, deployment of discursive techniques requires economic means, institutional frameworks, and ceremonial presentations.

To be sure, this short reflection does not answer the deeply contested questions of whether hegemony operates in world politics today, in what particular form and through what specific techniques. However, perhaps the schema outlined here can help to make the debates more focused and systematic.

