

Book Reviews

Hegemony and democracy. By Bruce Russett. New York : Routledge, 2011, pp. 259. ISBN : 978-0-415-57570-6.

Reviewer : Wunti, Musa Adamu (PhD Candidate).

We are in the world of struggle for power and domination between states and non-state actors. The idea of hegemony and democracy is nowadays an important element of expanding networks to the extent that hegemony undermines or supports democracy. Bruce Russett raises the question of whether hegemony is sustainable, especially when the hegemon is a democratic state. By applying theories of collective action and foreign policy, the author looks into American hegemony in the contemporary international system and the possibility for a democratic hegemon to retain its power and influence in the nearest future. Bruce Russett is a Professor of International Politics at Yale University. This compilation of his previously published articles forms his twenty seventh books, and one of these books with John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace* won him the International Studies association prize for best Book of the decade.

Russett's *Hegemony and Democracy* is divided into thirteen chapters. The first chapter is an intellectual history of American hegemony by positing that, "dominance is a condition never reached without an effort. And to achieve superiority over others requires strength, skill, determination, and luck." This chapter is to sets out that hegemony has some limitations giving example of US invasion of Iraq in 2003 which showed that regime change was harder than the Bush administration believed. His work represents ample contestations relating to global hegemony, especially the degrees to which democracy empower or hamper a hegemon.

Chapter two presents the authors belief that democratic politics may encourage or constrain expansionary foreign policies. This chapter, "Democracy, war and expansion through historical lenses", elucidates the argument that great power even if it is a democracy tend to be more prone to war than less powerful states, democracy or not. An important example that he develops is the successful militarized disputes in interstate war leading to thousand deaths which are more common between democracies and less between non-democratic states in history. Thus the author asks questions about the relationship between democracy and hegemony. The theoretical framework used to explain such relationship brings out a probabilistic notion about the behaviour between pairs of states, in terms of their culture and motivation in deploying fighting forces. Indeed, considering the range of great powers' involvement in series of fights as theorized by Thucydides, Russett perceived such act as expansionism.

Chapter three focuses on the role of ideas and theories in determining the strategies employed in fixing the expansionist foreign policy. He explained US dependence on resources imported from other countries that matter most to her national interest. These raw materials are strategic to US economy and military capabilities. This chapter gave a comprehensive example of threat to US strategic foreign policy by citing the oil crisis of 1970s which shocked the economy of great power. As a result, the US foreign policy then changed to use force whenever its national interest or values come under threat.

Chapter four and five gave an overview of the possibility of retention or otherwise of US hegemony given the growing number of challengers like the Chinese economic and military strength. While recognizing the US hegemonic power throughout the period of cold war, Russett postulated that, with the growing proliferation of nuclear technology and its development by adversaries, great power nuclear hegemony is now declining. Part of the reasons advanced by the author is that the use of nuclear weapons is impossible in war considering its devastating effects to parties involved. As such, deterring opponent with nuclear weapons is now useless and waste of resources and talent. In the earlier decades, nuclear weapons and promises by powerful states to use them, helped the viability of centralized power globally. But nuclear proliferations have brought a set back and have undermined great powers' dominance and control.

Chapter six and seven point out the impact of cold war and its role towards US nonviolent expansion of global hegemony at the end of the war. For the author, US expansionary foreign policy has led to the demise of its regional rival hegemon in the international system. Its influence according to Russett has invariably resulted to some changes in the political and economic policies of Soviet Union that led to its demise. The discussion shows how sudden change in Soviet Union's foreign policy pushed its adversaries into the formation of a united force in the international system.

The next three chapters of the book deals with important roles played by the international organizations in the regulation of the system via the formation of effective international governmental organizations aimed at bringing democratic states under the umbrella of the United Nations. This body serves as regulatory agency enabling and restraining the hegemon, like UN Security Council. Russett questions how democratic international organization like UN will be in the global system without being affected in its institutional process by the hegemonic powers. The issue raised here is the crisis of legitimacy facing the effectiveness of the UN in terms of its decision making powers. Thus, hegemonic power has the advantage of leading the UN directly or indirectly.

Chapter eleven focuses on the Kant's perspectives on international relations showing a dramatic change in warfare and the number of casualties in the world. Three important variables are shown to have linked to liberalism and its impetus on promoting peace globally. These variables comprise democracy and the hegemonic desire to spread it all over the world, international division of labour through multiple networks of communication, trade and finance-globalization and the multiplication of intergovernmental organization hoping to implement the interest of the hegemonic

powers in democratic governments and beyond. In essence the author pays attention to describing different theoretical postulates ranging from earliest perspectives to Kantian perspective in order to better our understanding of the relationships between power, hegemony and liberalism.

The next chapter adds some vital information on US involvement in the World War II as an effort to prevent foreign military threats and explain strategies employed by America. The last chapter which the author called the conclusion deals with democracy, hegemony and collective action. In this chapter Russett describes and analyses the relevance of realist and liberalist approaches in explaining international relations, particularly in relation to the application of power and its effect on how elites design foreign policy. He again questions whether hegemony is sustainable internationally. Considering the nature of international system within which an alliance takes place among states, security to members is obtainable even though costs and benefits may not be shared equally. It is here that Russett explains the role of economic power and capitalism as a source of power. The final section concluded with big question as to how long can a state be both hegemonic and democratic.

To sum up, this book is a significant contribution to the literature in international relations and helps understand some of the contradictions exhibited by politics of dominance and power retention in the international system. The author provides a critique of US hegemony and expresses fear on the possibility of sustaining this hegemonic power. While diverting from the ideal principle of democratic state US according to this book is likely to degrade as an empire of a chaotic failed hegemony.

Islamic activists : The anti-enlightenment democrats. By Deina Ali Abdelkader. London : Pluto Press, 2011, pp. viii-157. ISBN 978 – 0 – 7453 – 2216 – 2.

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The Arab uprising has attracted attentions especially when the uprising was made against regimes that have long been in power. The mass movements against the regime were unique because men and women of all religious and social backgrounds protested across the country demanding an end to dictatorship and economic corruption. However, among the protests there were elements of Islamists who have been fighting the government for a long time and suffered under those regimes. Many of them have been tortured, imprisoned, murdered and force to exile in secluded parts of the country. Deina Ali Abdelkader has studied these mass uprisings against regimes. She also studied the role of Shari'ah and Muslim's expectations as well as Islamist leaders, their ideas and writings.

This book is useful for those who want to know more about the contemporary political ideology and Middle East as well as North Africa. This book is easy to read since