

THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND THE PARADIGMS OF NATIONAL INTEREST, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND HEGEMONY

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Contextualization: Today, a new configuration of international relations is taking place, and the global challenge seems to be more pronounced than ever. Global actors have few common interests, different norms and values, and a lack of global vision. This has led to a world where competition and conflicts are re-emerging in a concerning manner, making the global population feel threatened in terms of their health and security.

Objectives: In this article, we aim to reassess three analytical paradigms—national interest, solidarity, and hegemony—to provide fresh insights into comprehending the evolving global system. By doing so, we aim to highlight the necessity of reevaluating effective global governance for managing the global commons, in an historical moment where competition and conflicts are re-emerging in a concerning manner.

Method: The methodological approach combines theoretical analysis and bibliographic review. The text examines historical and contemporary concepts of national interest, solidarity, and hegemony, drawing on contributions from authors such as Emile Durkheim, Léon Bourgeois, Antonio Gramsci, and Robert Cox.

Results: The study concludes that the evolution of the concept of national interest demands effective cooperation between states and global actors to protect shared interests. Furthermore, international solidarity, grounded in mutual interests, is essential to addressing global challenges and promoting more inclusive governance.

Keywords: Global Governance; Global Order; National Interest; International Solidarity; Hegemony.

A GOVERNANÇA GLOBAL E OS PARADIGMAS DE INTERESSE NACIONAL, SOLIDARIEDADE INTERNACIONAL E HEGEMONIA

Contextualização: Atualmente, está se configurando uma nova dinâmica de relações internacionais, e o desafio global parece mais pronunciado do que nunca. Os atores globais compartilham poucos interesses comuns, possuem normas e valores diferentes e carecem de uma visão global. Isso levou a um mundo onde a competição e os conflitos estão ressurgindo de forma preocupante, fazendo com que a população global se sinta ameaçada em termos de sua saúde e segurança.

Objetivo: Neste artigo, buscamos reavaliar três paradigmas analíticos—interesse nacional, solidariedade e hegemonia—para oferecer novas perspectivas que auxiliem na compreensão do sistema global em evolução. Com isso, destacamos a necessidade de reconsiderar a eficácia da governança global para gerir os bens comuns globais, em um momento histórico em que a competição e os conflitos estão ressurgindo de forma preocupante.

Método: A abordagem metodológica combina análise teórica e revisão bibliográfica. O texto examina conceitos históricos e contemporâneos de interesse nacional, solidariedade e hegemonia, utilizando as contribuições de autores como Émile Durkheim, Léon Bourgeois, Antonio Gramsci e Robert Cox.

Resultados: O estudo conclui que a evolução do conceito de interesse nacional exige uma cooperação eficaz entre os Estados e os atores globais para proteger interesses compartilhados. Além disso, a solidariedade internacional, baseada em interesses mútuos, é essencial para enfrentar os desafios globais e promover uma governança mais inclusiva.

Palavras-chave: Governança Global; Ordem Global; Interesse Nacional; Solidariedade Internacional; Hegemonia.

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Contextualización: Hoy en día, se está configurando una nueva dinámica de relaciones internacionales, y el desafío global parece más pronunciado que nunca. Los actores globales comparten pocos intereses comunes, tienen normas y valores diferentes y carecen de una visión global. Esto ha llevado a un mundo donde la competencia y los conflictos están resurgiendo de manera preocupante, haciendo que la población global se sienta amenazada en términos de su salud y seguridad.

Objetivos: En este artículo, buscamos reevaluar tres paradigmas analíticos—interés nacional, solidaridad y hegemonía—para ofrecer nuevas perspectivas que ayuden a comprender el sistema global en evolución. Al hacerlo, destacamos la necesidad de reconsiderar la eficacia de la gobernanza global para gestionar los bienes comunes globales, en un momento histórico en el que la competencia y los conflictos están resurgiendo de manera preocupante.

Método: El enfoque metodológico combina análisis teórico y revisión bibliográfica. El texto examina conceptos históricos y contemporâneos de interés nacional, solidaridad y hegemonía, utilizando las contribuciones de autores como Émile Durkheim, Léon Bourgeois, Antonio Gramsci y Robert Cox.

Resultados: El estudio concluye que la evolución del concepto de interés nacional exige una cooperación eficaz entre los estados y los actores globales para proteger los intereses compartidos. Además, la solidaridad internacional, basada en intereses mutuos, es esencial para enfrentar los desafíos globales y promover una gobernanza más inclusiva.

Palabras clave: Gobernanza Global; Orden Global; Interés Nacional; Solidaridad Internacional; Hegemonía.

INTRODUCTION

The current world is characterized by a contradiction between increasing social, economic, and technological interdependence and growing political fragmentation, challenging the effectiveness of global governance. Global governance refers to a framework of institutions, rules, norms, and procedures that facilitate collective action and cooperation among states and non-state actors. It aims to address challenges that cross national borders and require unified solutions, particularly in managing global resources, global security, and economic development, what can be commonly defined as public common goods. Today's global governance is facing challenges such as disorder in the worldwide system. This disorder has multiple causes, including the global redistribution of economic, political, and cultural power, leading to the emergence of a multipolar world. Western countries have been unable to recognize and adapt to this shift, which calls for a more functional global governance that equally includes emerging countries in the management of global issues. This requires abandoning a sense of moral superiority that has characterized the attitude of Western countries for centuries.

This article aims to re-examine three analytical paradigms - national interest, solidarity, and hegemony - to offer new insights into understanding the changing global system and the need to reconsider effective global governance for managing the global commons. The concept of national interest, associated with realism theory, will be re-examined considering the interdependence among global actors, meaning that to protect their national interests, states must engage in effective and constructive cooperation in critical sectors. The idea of "self-interest altruism" stems from the understanding that something happening or concerning one country has consequences for others. Moreover, the interests of each nation are interconnected and deeply reliant on global interests, embodying the concept of solidarity. The re-examination of solidarity will take into consideration international or cross-border solidarity, which is not just a moral principle but a mutual obligation that binds humans, making them debtors to each other in the name of humanity. Finally, the concept of hegemony, including different forms of power, will be approached based on the contributions of international relations scholars such as Robert Cox. These scholars, building on the concept of hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci, developed the idea that for a state to achieve hegemony, it must establish an order based on mutual interests rather than exploitation. This transformative power of hegemony serves as a tool for powerful countries, where social and economic changes lead to transformations in political and economic systems, releasing forces that spread beyond national borders.

1. THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

There is no doubt that the world is currently undergoing a significant geopolitical transition, leading to the development of a new configuration of international relations. The global actors seem to have fewer common interests, they are different in terms of norms, values and objectives. This represents a serious challenge to the efficacy of global governance. As result, the world, characterized by competition and conflicts, is perceived by the global population less secure.

The current international system is defined by two closely linked elements. The first is the contradiction between the strong economic and financial interdependence of states and other actors, the second element is the political fragmentation or lack of coordination among them. This contradiction makes it difficult to coordinate crisis management policies and global governance, which are now top priorities in international politics¹.

Furthermore, the most significant phenomenon of our time, globalization, has completely modified economic and political relations between States, brought out new players on an international scale, and produced radical changes in the lives of individuals on all continents.

The increasing political fragmentation, conflicts in different parts of the world, and competition among global powers are jeopardizing the management of "global public goods." According to Joseph Stiglitz, global governance stems from this concept. These global public goods encompass tangible resources such as water, forests, and natural resources, as well as intangible factors like international security, economic stability, humanitarian aid, environmental protection, and the advancement of knowledge. As emphasized by Stiglitz, these goods should exhibit "non-rivalry" in their consumption and "non-excludability" of their beneficiaries².

To gain a comprehensive understanding of global issues that require collaborative action from international stakeholders, we can turn to the work of Jean-François Rischard, who identified twenty key challenges that demand urgent attention. These challenges are grouped into three categories: issues related to the planet (common goods), those concerning humanity, and challenges that necessitate regulation. The first category, concerning common goods, encompasses global warming, loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, depletion of fishery resources, deforestation, water scarcity, maritime safety, and pollution. The second category, concerning humanity, includes combating poverty, peacekeeping, conflict

¹ MARTINELLI, A. Lo scenario politico globale e il declino dell'egemonia americana. Paper for the conference: **Quinta Lectio Mario Stoppino**, Université Luigi Bocconi, Milano, 18-19 novembre 2010.

² STIGLITZ, J. Global Public Goods and Global Finance: Does Global Governance Ensure that the Global Public Interest is Served? In: TOUFFUT, J-P. (Ed.). **Advancing Public Goods**. Edward Elgar Publishing, chapter 7, 2006.

prevention, antiterrorism efforts, universal education, combating global infectious diseases, addressing digital technology disparities, and preventing natural disasters. The third category, concerning regulation, includes redefining taxation for the 21st century, combating drug trafficking, protecting intellectual property rights, shaping global finance architecture, and regulating the biotechnology sector, trade, e-commerce, migration, international labor, and competitiveness³.

National states still carry significant influence, but even the most powerful countries are no longer able to handle and solve or manage global issues on their own or even within a small group of states. But as affirmed by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the UN-EU High-level Dialogue in Brussels (2023) *“Multilateralism is more vital than ever: To bring peace. To protect the planet. To end hunger. To build guardrails for new technologies”*⁴. The primary challenge in global governance today is the current political system's inability to effectively address global challenges. This reflects different aspects: a lack of solidarity and a national interest-focused and short-term vision of states, as well as the desire of global powers to dominate the global system with their hegemony, in a material, ideational, and relational sense. This vision does not consider how the security and interests of each country are interconnected and dependent on those of other countries and members of the global community. Every state affirms its engagement in the construction of a rules-based system. Still, in the name of protecting their sovereignty and national interest, they don't respect the agreed rules when they go against their interests, including the Western countries that have set the main rules of the actual system. The current situation has numerous geopolitical implications. As observed by Joseph Stiglitz, Western nations are experiencing a decline in support for global cooperation on important issues like climate change, global health, resolving conflicts, and the apparent struggle between Washington and China for democracy and hegemony⁵.

The lack of effective global governance, defined as a framework of institutions, rules, norms, and procedures that promote collective action and cooperation among countries and other actors, reflects the disorder in the global system and the global redistribution of economic, political, and cultural power that is leading to the emergence of a new global order. The creation of BRIC in 2009, an intergovernmental cooperation among Brazil, Russia, India, and China, and its expansion to BRICS in 2011 when South Africa joined, represented the emerging countries' desire to establish a multipolar order and have a stronger voice in global

³ RISCHARD, J-F. **High Noon: 20 Global Problems, 20 Years to Solve Them**. New York: Basic Book, 2002.

⁴ UNITED NATIONS, Regional Information Centre for Western Europe. 5 reasons why we need multilateralism for global peace and security. 2024. Available at: <https://unric.org/en/5-reasons-why-we-need-multilateralism-for-global-peace-and-security/>.

⁵ STIGLITZ, J. Where Global Governance Went Wrong—and How to Fix It. **Foreign Policy**, 28 April 2024. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/28/global-governance-wto-how-to-fix-it/>

governance. The recent expansion of the group to BRICS+ (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates) allows emerging markets to align on global issues and access new economic opportunities (Azevedo, Bakliwal, Chen, Gilbert, Koch-Weser, Lang, McAdoo)⁶.

Additionally, there is reluctance from Western powers to reform multilateral institutions to reflect this shift. Emerging countries are demanding a major role in global affairs and a more equitable representation in the international institutions created after the Second World War by Western countries to keep peace among them. They are also establishing new and alternative initiatives, including new multilateral financial institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS bank, and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), both of which are based in China. This seems to be an initial effort to reform the conventional global financial system. Multilateralism is waning at a time when effective global governance and collective action are essential for addressing complex challenges.

The idea of global governance is quite intricate and the subject of extensive discussions among experts and international actors. One crucial issue is leadership: Could a superpower or the hegemonic power take charge of global governance, and if so, which one? Currently, the United States is still widely seen as the dominant power in the international system. This is because of several factors, including their position as the world's leading economic power, their significant control of major companies in the ICT sector, their superior military capabilities, and their involvement in the majority of conflicts in different regions of the world. But despite these factors, it may be challenging for the United States to ensure global governance. For example, their economic deficit leads to a lack of political support from other international actors who, given the new world order, may not accept their absolute dominance. According to Fareed Zakaria, the United States remains a political and military superpower, but in other areas such as some industries, finance, education, and culture, its power is declining. With the rise of China, India, and other emerging markets, the world is becoming more decentralized and interconnected, signalling a shift towards a post-American world led by multiple nations⁷. More recently, debate surrounding the future of the global order has intensified following the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Many observers consider this moment to be an epoch-changing event.

The United States is currently dealing with internal challenges and is experiencing a gradual weakening of its international dominance. This is because other powerful centres, particularly China, are emerging, leading to a redistribution of global political and economic

⁶ AZEVEDO, D.; BAKLIWAL, S.; CHEN, C.; GILBERT, M.; KOCH-WESER, I.; LANG, N.; MCADOO, M. **An evolving BRICS and the shifting World order**. 2024. Available at: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/brics-enlargement-and-shifting-world-order>.

⁷ ZAKARIA, F. **The Post-American World**. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

power. The Asian continent, led by the remarkable economic growth of China, is currently undergoing a significant power shift at the global level. Franco Mazzei emphasized that historically, power transitions have always taken place from one Western power to another Western power since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. However, for the first time in history, power is now shifting from the West to the East⁸.

Since the early 1980s, China has become the world's second-largest economy due to its opening-up policies under Deng Xiaoping. This growth has positioned the country as a global power despite several internal challenges that China is facing, such as rising unemployment, slowing growth, demographic shifts, trade tensions, technological competition, and environmental concerns. These factors, together with a still controversial international reputation and a still weak ability to affirm itself as a normative power or rule-setter power, hinder China from being considered a global governance leader.

Meanwhile, the European Union is not currently seen as a major global power by its partners mainly due to its decreasing economic influence, military limitations, and lack of unified vision among member states and a lack of shared global ambitions. Other countries such as India, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, and Nigeria, for example, play strategic roles in specific sectors or in their own regions, but their potential to assume global governance leadership remains uncertain in the near future⁹.

The current situation highlights the need for global governance to coordinate international political agendas and expand the group of decision-makers. The urgency of global governance is clear, but the political fragmentation in today's international relations makes it difficult for states to reach agreements.

In the context of global governance, it's crucial to acknowledge that states are no longer the sole participants in international politics. Non-governmental organizations, collective movements, multinational companies, religious communities, social enterprises and individuals, among others, now play an increasingly significant role. They have expanded their transnational activities and have become relevant agents in global governance. Non-state actors are increasingly involved in creating synergy and partnerships with governments and inter-governmental institutions, bringing new perspectives and interpretations to global issues through different levels of coordination and by introducing new paradigms¹⁰.

Another important factor to consider is global public opinion, which can be

⁸ MAZZEI, F. **Relazioni internazionali**. Milano: Egea, 2012.- 14 p.

⁹ ATTALI, J. **Domani, chi governerà il mondo?** Roma: Fazi Editore, 2012. p. 228.

¹⁰ JELIN, E. A propos du global et du local: les mouvements sociaux et l'action collective. In: HERNANDEZ, V.; OULD-AHMED, P.; PAPAIL, J.; PHELINAS, P. (Eds.). **L'action collective à l'épreuve de la globalisation**. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007. p. 108

defined in various ways, such as "a civil international society" or "a global public space." However, the expression that best encapsulates its meaning is "the new global consciousness." This term reflects the emerging of an international solidarity among citizens of the world who refuse to be excluded from the decision-making process. Jeffrey C. Alexandre has defined global civil society as "a sphere of influence and independent action in relation to the State, the market, and other spheres"¹¹. One of the main outcomes is the intensification of Global Social Movements (GSMs) defined as networks (of individuals, organizations, and communities) that collaborate across borders to advance thematically similar agendas throughout the world and in doing so have become powerful actors in global governance¹². In his book "*Social Movements in Global Politics*" David West presents the argument that the twenty-first century is marked by a significant crisis in institutional politics. He suggests that nation-state governments are increasingly unable to effectively address persistent, potentially disastrous issues such as global climate change, world population growth, global inequality, and the erosion of local cultures. This incapacity has led to widespread discontent with traditional politicians and political systems. West contends that these deficiencies in policymaking are not insurmountable and could be remedied through alternative forms of political engagement, such as social movements. He defines social movements as "enduring patterns of collective activity that occur outside and often in opposition to official political institutions"¹³.

2. THREE PARADIGMS OF ANALYSIS

In the following paragraph, we will explore the need to revisit three analytical paradigms that could provide new insights into understanding the evolving global system and the necessity to reconsider effective global governance for managing the global commons, as discussed in the preceding section. These three paradigms are national interest, solidarity, and hegemony.

2.1 National Interest

The concept of national interest is dynamic and changes with shifts in society and the global environment. In international relations, it has been historically dominated by "realism," which focuses on the state as the primary actor in international affairs. Realists view

¹¹ JEFFREY A. **Real Civil Societies**. Dilemmas of Institutionalization. London: Sage Publications, 1998. p. 6

¹² BENNETT, E. A. Global Social Movements in Global Governance. **Globalizations**, v. 9, n. 6, p. 799–813, 2012. Disponible en: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2012.739343>.

¹³ WEST, D. **Social Movements in Global Politics**. Polity, First Edition, 2013.

international relationships through the lens of power, with security being the main goal of foreign policy to protect the national interest. In this view, the international system is seen as anarchic, leading to potential conflicts between states.

However, with the increasing interdependence between states due to globalization, the concept of national interest has evolved. While military defence remains important, economic interests have become a primary factor in foreign policy decisions, reflecting the high level of dependency on the global economic landscape.

The interdependence between international actors is a crucial aspect of national interest because a country's defence can no longer rely solely on its own resources. It requires cooperation and joint actions with other international actors (include the non-State actors). Unilateral actions taken by a single country, such as currency depreciation or the implementation of protectionist measures, can significantly impact the economies of all other countries. A prime example is the ongoing trade war between China and the US. The dynamic relationship between these two nations has far-reaching effects on the global economy, leading to the reshaping of global supply chains. This has implications not only for Chinese and US companies, but also for businesses in other countries.

So, if, on the one hand, the State remains sovereign by legal principles¹⁴, on the other, the interdependence with others makes its autonomy precarious about decisions and political strategies. The balance of state dependence/autonomy is thus called into question. According to Hubert Védrine (former French Minister of Foreign Affairs), the world is entirely marked by almost total interdependence, and therefore, in this context, we must ask ourselves the following question: How can States (in a globalized world where a total economic and political independence is no longer possible) do they maintain the autonomy of their thought and their decisions? In this case, it is more about mental independence, that is to say, the ability to understand the world, the power to analyse the dynamics of the world, awareness of its role in the international panorama, and knowing what direction the State wants to take politically, socially and economically. In short: what are the objectives to be

¹⁴ According to international law, independence is the key aspect of sovereignty, as seen in constitutional autonomy. This means that people have the power to choose their political, social, and economic systems and are not under the authority of other entities. State sovereignty allows a country to maintain its independence. Sovereignty in public and international law is known as "*suprema potestas*" which refers to the ultimate power of the State. This power is demonstrated through political, legislative, administrative, and judicial authority. Sovereignty also implies independence in foreign policy, enabling a country to maintain relationships with other global actors on an equal basis. However, sovereignty is not absolute and is limited by international commitments that countries make, such as joining international organizations. In the Island of Palmas case, the sole arbitrator of the Permanent Court of Arbitration stated that sovereignty in international relations means independence, which grants the right to exclude other states from exercising their authority in a particular region (Arbitral award of April 4, 1928, of the CPA, Case of the island of Palmas).

achieved and the challenges to be met?¹⁵.

Interdependence has sparked a debate about the role of the State in relation to current international standards. Various experts hold different views on this topic. Susan Strange suggests that national power may come to an end, while others, such as Guido Bertucci, argue that better cooperation and coordinated actions between States actually demonstrate the exercise of State sovereignty¹⁶. Despite a decrease in shared independence and autonomy, the State still retains the monopoly on managing political and legal structures within the framework of its national sovereignty, where all political decisions must be implemented. The State continues to be the principal guarantor of the national interest, responsible for defending its national territory, managing its economy, overseeing its environment, culture, heritage, security, and integrating diverse cultures within its increasingly cosmopolitan cities to ensure the well-being of its citizens. But a reflection is necessary: how can states guarantee national interest today? The state should act as a filter between its constituents (citizens, institutions, markets, cultures, heritage, etc.) and the outside world. It should work to minimize the negative effects of globalization (which unfortunately often impact the most vulnerable segments of the population) by implementing appropriate social policies and by creating positive outcomes such as improved access to knowledge and information. The state remains the entity best positioned to protect national interests by strengthening institutions, social capital, social policies, the efficiency of public administration, and by supporting the application of knowledge, innovation, and technology. Therefore, cooperation among countries and other global actors across various sectors such as politics, economy, culture, social issues, education, and health is essential.

At present, cooperation through bilateral and multilateral agreements primarily focuses on military and economic aspects, with less attention given to political and cultural collaborations. This emphasis is due to states prioritizing maximizing profits by accessing new markets and strengthening their presence in existing ones during these engagements. In order to protect their national interests, states must engage in effective and constructive cooperation in critical sectors. Cooperation should not be limited to crises; it should be targeted toward strengthening relationships and providing solutions to issues that concern the involved actors, global issues, and the management of the global commons. To guarantee a good quality of life and an improved standard of living for their citizens, nations must focus on their own development in both the short and long term. However, because of limited resources, security issues, and geographical dependencies, among other reasons, a nation

¹⁵ LARCAN, A. L'actualité des principes gaulliens en matière de politique étrangère: dialogue avec Hubert Vedrine. **Revue Espoir**, n. 155, December 2008.

¹⁶ BERTUCCI, G.; ALBERTI, A. **Globalization and the Role of the State: Challenges and Perspectives**. Part du rapport des Nations Unies: United Nations World Public Sector Report 2001, Globalization and the State, n° ST/ESA/PAD/SER.26, 2000.

must maintain good relations with other nations and cooperate with them. This means that global governance is no longer just an option but a political instrument through which states ensure the protection of worldwide interests and, consequently, their own national interests. In summary, the interests of each nation are increasingly interconnected and reliant on global interests, which affect all of humanity and embody the concept of solidarity.

2.2 International Solidarity

In legal terms, solidarity refers to a situation in which several people have a common obligation, such as the possession of a thing or a right. When it comes to international solidarity, it is seen as an altruistic concept, which is achieved through humanitarian aid, assistance from wealthy countries to poorer ones, the efforts of non-governmental organizations, and the missions of volunteers in countries facing challenges, as well as charity campaigns for citizens. In this article, we suggest using the concept of solidarity, which is based on the idea of mutual and shared interests.

Two influential authors who contributed to the development of the concept of solidarity are the French scholars Emile Durkheim and Léon Bourgeois. Emile Durkheim, who is known as the founder of sociology in France, introduced the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity refers to traditional societies where individuals are connected through shared values such as beliefs, way of thinking, and behaviours. On the other hand, organic solidarity, introduced in Durkheim's work "*De la division du travail social*" (1893), is a characteristic of modern and complex societies marked by the specialization of social functions. The division of labour creates solidarity because all functions are essential for the proper functioning of the society, similar to the way each organ in the body serves a specific function. In this model, relationships between individuals are based on the principles of complementarity and cooperation, where each person relies on others. Durkheim emphasized that no individual exists independently of the larger social structure; rather, each person is an integral part of the collective human association¹⁷.

Durkheim's idea inspired the work of Léon Bourgeois on the concept of solidarity, which is a doctrine of political thought based on the responsibility between two or more people. In his work "*Solidarité*" (1896), he defines solidarity as the ideal of human mutual assistance. Bourgeois' thought is particularly original due to his notion of "social debt," which refers to the debt towards contemporaries because of the exchange of services and efforts of all, as well as towards the previous generations who have contributed to the scientific and intellectual progress of humanity by creating a capital of ideas for their descendants.

¹⁷ DURKHEIM, E. *De la Division du travail social*. Paris: PUF, 2013. (Collection: Quadrimage, numéro 84).

According to Bourgeois, individuals are born as debtors to human society and therefore have a duty towards the community. People, who naturally need to live together, are linked by a social contract on which solidarity is based. This contract is a tacit agreement that binds the individual and society. Mutuality is then considered the supreme rule of living together¹⁸.

The concepts of solidarity developed by these two authors help us understand a different aspect of international solidarity: cross-border solidarity based on a contract that binds humans and makes them debtors to each other in the name of humanity, in both goods and resources that members of the global community share among themselves. The last few decades have been characterized by powerful connections that have developed worldwide, not just on the economic, financial, and political levels, but also in relationships between people and cultures. Interdependence between human beings has never been greater. It is increasing day by day, thanks to the reduction in information transfer costs, which facilitates immediate knowledge of world events¹⁹.

This process has allowed for the development of an awareness of humankind, or human association, as conceptualized by Durkheim. This awareness gives rise to solidarity, which has become increasingly crucial as the entire human race is now facing urgent challenges, such as environmental degradation, the threat of nuclear weapons, food and water insecurity, and the management of essential natural resources, all of which are being overshadowed by the dominance of market forces. The concept of "social debt," introduced by the Bourgeois, helps us comprehend the acknowledgment owed by present-day humanity to previous generations in terms of environmental, scientific, human, and cultural contributions. This debt can only be repaid through safeguarding this legacy and contributing to the progress of humanity, ensuring that future generations benefit just as we do from the inheritance left by our ancestors.

Nowadays, the debt we owe to each other, as theorized by Bourgeois in the field of service exchanges, is particularly relevant at an international level. The production of goods today often involves the exchange of services between multiple countries on different continents. The advancement of information technologies and communication allows us to benefit from new ideas that contribute to the evolution of human thought regardless of where they are created. This creates a significant level of interdependence among people, so that the suffering and discomfort of one part of the population increasingly has consequences for others. Jacques Attali discussed the concept of "self-interested altruism," where individuals act in their own interest to prevent negative outcomes from affecting them. David Held challenged the traditional separation between national and international matters, arguing

¹⁸ BOURGEOIS, L. **Solidarité**. Lormont: Le Bord De L'eau, 2008. (Collection: Bibliothèque Républicaine).

¹⁹ ATTALI, J. **Domani, chi governerà il mondo?** Roma: Fazi Editore, 2012. p. 216-217.

that issues such as the development of Africa and the management of the AIDS pandemic are no longer external to the European Union, as Africa's suffering can have repercussions beyond its borders, such as through migration, epidemics, or political instability stemming from conflict situations²⁰.

The effective operation of the entire system, as per Durkheim's concept of solidarity, relies on the proper functioning of each individual part. For instance, as per Held's example, the European Union must take into account events outside its borders in order to ensure the well-being of its citizens, as repercussions from those events are felt within its territories. Mutual cooperation and reciprocity have become essential, as everyone now depends on each other.

Jeremy Rifkin argues that cooperation and solidarity are the foundation of a third industrial revolution. He believes that the "emphatic civilization" is essential for the future. Rifkin suggests that empathy is a fundamental human characteristic. He states that climate issues and shared suffering will compel us to acknowledge our common humanity and that empathy is driven by rational reasons of mutual interest, which are emerging in response to natural disasters and the current risks of resource depletion. Consequently, there is growing interest in rethinking development models that prioritize the well-being of all people and the protection of the planet within the context of globalization²¹.

Solidarity is a fundamental principle that should be deeply woven into the fabric of international politics, serving as a unifying and guiding force among global actors. This encompasses fostering strong bilateral relations, promoting collaborative efforts across different regions within the framework of international organizations, and actively engaging non-state actors in the pursuit of common goals.

From a global governance perspective, solidarity as a principle could help world leaders and other actors to reconsider new models of economic, political, and cultural cooperation focused on the well-being of all. This is based on values such as openness, social justice, and tolerance, which are essential for leveraging cultural differences as incredible resources for development. Failing to uphold these values poses a risk of mutual intolerance, which is highly dangerous for overall stability and security.

²⁰ PLEYERS, G. David Held: Analyste de la mondialisation et militant d'une social-démocratie mondiale. Available at: <http://www.institut-gouvernance.org/fr/analyse/fiche-analyse-296.html#h1>.

²¹ RIFKIN, J. **La società dell'empatia. La corsa verso la coscienza globale nel mondo in crisi**. Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2010-2011.

3. POWER AND HEGEMONY

Power plays a central role in the field of international relations. The concept of "dimensions of power" refers to the various ways in which power is understood and utilized. The first dimension involves coercion, which is the use of military force or economic influence by a state or political entity to influence the behaviour of other actors. This dimension, often referred to as hard power, has historically been the primary view of power in realist theory, championed by thinkers such as Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, who justified its use for national interest protection. In a realistic perspective, Dahl's definition of power remains influential and explanatory: an actor who uses their material resources to convince another actor to do something they would not have done otherwise²². Hard Power presupposes the possibility of using force based on material resources, in this sense power is based on the particular material capabilities that a state possesses, and these material capabilities are essentially tangible assets that determine a nation's military strength"²³.

Kenneth Waltz, who is considered the leading theorist of neo-realism, defines power as being based on the size of the population and territory, as well as on the capacity for economic and military strength, political stability, and competence²⁴. According to Waltz, hard power is linked to the tangible resources that a state has at its disposal to assert its dominance. This realistic tradition has been particularly influential during the two World Wars and the Cold War.

In the 1990s, a new dimension of power began to emerge, based on the idea that, unlike hard power, hegemony can be achieved through intangible resources such as values, ideas, and culture. The state must develop its ability to obtain what it wants through the power of attraction rather than through coercion. The idea of soft power was developed by Joseph Nye who explains it as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than force, coercion or payments. It develops from the attractiveness of the culture, ideals, policies, and policies of a country. When our policies are considered legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is increased²⁵.

Hard power and soft power represent two aspects of power. To quote Nye, "hard power means pushing, soft power means pulling"²⁶. Soft power is based on three main elements: culture, political values, and foreign policy. Culture consists of social values such as

²² DAHL, R. The concept of power. **Behavioral Science**, v. 2, n. 3, 1957.

²³ MAERSHEIMER, J. **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**. New York: Norton Series, 2001.

²⁴ WALTZ, K. **Theory of International Politics**. Pearson: Addison Wesley, 1979. p. 131. (Addison Wesley series in Political Science).

²⁵ NYE, J. Soft power: the means to success. **World Politics**, 2004.

²⁶ NYE, J. Power and Foreign Policy. **Journal of Political Power**, v. 4, n. 1, April 2011.

lifestyle, quality of life, and opportunities that inspire admiration and emulation²⁷. Political values are those promoted in a state's domestic and international policies²⁸ (for instance, in the European Union, these are the principles outlined in art. 21 of Title V of TEU: democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance). A model of political effectiveness, among other values, also exercises an attractive power, as does foreign policy. For example, the use of public diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral relations, limited unilateral actions, respect for the law, international standards, norms, and institutions are all important soft power instruments.

Nye and Keohane argue that in a globalized world, the role of communication and information technologies will further develop this type of power²⁹. A few years later, Nye expanded the concept of soft power and developed the idea of smart power, which he defines as the ability to combine, depending on the situation, both hard power and soft power in a strategy for success.

The dimensions of power that we have discussed, such as the coercion exercised in military and economic domains, and the attraction exerted in the sphere of values, norms, political ideals, culture, and more generally in the intellectual sphere, are considered the resources of hegemony. It's important to note that the combination of several resources can determine the hegemony of a State or a political organization.

The term hegemony, derived from the Greek *hêgemonia* meaning supreme leadership, refers to the dominance of a state in international relations or over a political-territorial community within a system³⁰. Studies on hegemony are often associated with the traditional realist perspective of international relations, which posits that all states are in constant conflict for power in a system characterized by anarchy.

The concept of hegemony was significantly developed by the Italian Antonio Gramsci in his work *Quaderni del Carcere (Prison Notebooks)* written from 1929 to 1935 during his imprisonment by the fascist regime. Gramsci's theory of hegemony suggests that power relies not only on strength but also on consensus. He defined hegemony as cooperation ensured by force, the integration of social and political control, and consensus³¹. According to Gramsci, there are two forms of political control: domination (based mainly on coercion) and

²⁷ NYE, J. **The Paradoxes of American Power**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. p.14.

²⁸ NYE, J. **The Paradoxes of American Power**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. p.14.

KEOHANE, R.; NYE, J. Power and Interdependence in the Information Age. **Foreign Affairs Reader**, v. 77, n. 5, September/October 1998

³⁰ BOBBIO, N.; MATTEUCCI, N.; PASQUINO, G. **Dicionário de Política**. Brasília: Editoria UnB, v. 1, 2007. P. 579

³¹ BARRETT, M. Ideology, Politics, Hegemony: from Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe. **Mapping Ideology**. London: Slavoj ŽIŽEK, Verso, 1997. p. 279

hegemony (based on consensus)³².

Hegemony is the process by which the dominant group in society, such as a political party or social class, influences the values and interests of all members of civil society. The dominant group's value system becomes the common belief system for the entire society, leading to the control of civil society by this group. This results in the identification of "the good" by civil society with the interests of the dominant class. According to Antonio Gramsci, this leads to the development of an authentic culture of consensus, which he defines as a "passive revolution."

Starting from this conceptualization, various international authors, known as neo-Gramscian, developed their theories by applying Gramsci's concept of hegemony to international relations. One of the most influential neo-Gramscian is the Canadian Robert Cox, whose works in the 1980s began to analyse the implications of applying Gramsci's theory of hegemony to the global system.

In order to understand how hegemony operates within the international system, it's important to shift from a perspective that focuses solely on individual nation states to one that considers the system as a whole³³. Cox stresses that when analysing Gramsci's work, it's essential to recognize the presence of the international dimension. Gramsci himself asked if the international relations precede or logically follow fundamental social relations. He stated that there is no doubt that they follow them. All innovations in the social structure, through its technical-military expressions, organically modify absolute and relative relationships in the international domain³⁴. Gramsci thus argues that changes in international relations (or those concerning the world order) originate from the transformations that occur in social relationships. In this context, the State remains the primary entity in international relations because it is precisely in the States that the hegemonies of social classes are built.

Cox argues that for a state to become hegemonic, it needs to establish and maintain an order that is not based on exploiting others but rather making sure that others find this order in line with their interests. Hegemony serves as a tool for the most powerful countries, where social and economic changes have already taken place, leading to transformations in political and economic systems and releasing energies that seek to spread these changes beyond national borders. The economic, social, cultural, and technological structures of the country where the revolution takes place become a model for imitation for

³² GRAMSCI, A. **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

³³ GILL, S. Epistemology, Ontology and the "Italian School". In: **Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations**, edited by S. Gill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. p. 21- 48.

³⁴ With the term "organic," Gramsci refers to everything that is structural and has long-lasting implications. In COX, R. Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations. An Essay in Method. **Journal of International Studies**, v. 12, n. 2, 1983. p. 162-175.

the rest of the world. By imitating this system of values and mode of production, a revolution also occurs in peripheral countries.

In the global context, hegemony refers to a dominant model of production that extends across all countries. It involves a complex network of global social relations that connect the social classes of different countries. Hegemony is characterized by its economic, social, and political structure, which is evident in the universal norms and behaviours imposed on states by international institutions and mechanisms. These norms and behaviours are also supported by parts of civil society that operate across borders.

International institutions play a fundamental role in the development of hegemony. According to Robert Cox, they themselves are the product of the hegemonic world order. They ideologically legitimize the norms of the world order, implying the elites of peripheral countries are, in some way, condemned to work within the structures of passive revolution and absorb anti-hegemonic ideas because these ideas are adapted to the hegemonic doctrine.

Since the end of World War II, the global system has been largely influenced by Western countries, particularly the United States. Western values have significantly shaped the political and economic global system, supported by key international organizations created by Western nations. Following the Cold War, there was an anticipation that the world would transition to an unipolar system, embracing free market economies, liberal democracies and more in general Western values. However, emerging countries like the BRICS have started to challenge Western dominance. China, in particular, has played a prominent role in advocating for a multipolar world and a change in the structure of international institutions. China, aspiring to be a major global power, supports an alternative global order, contesting the US-led hegemony and the Western-dominated global order. In light of the Western countries' inability to effectively resolve contemporary international conflicts and the subsequent erosion of their moral authority, China may be laying the groundwork for a more attractive multipolar and post-Western global order.

The President Xi Jinping presents China as an alternative standards setter for the developing world, focusing especially in important areas such, development and climate change. Recently China has celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative presented as a mutually beneficial opportunity for global community members, especially developing countries. Xi Jinping criticizes the Western standards that have historically dominated the international system, particularly the imposition of democracy and specific political systems. China maintains that these are not universal values but rather apply to a select group of nations, primarily Western countries, and do not represent the diverse values of the broader international community.

The BRI serves as an important platform for China to promote its ambitious agenda of regional and global governance reforms³⁵. But for the moment, its military ambitions are different from the traditional powers. China seeks to be a significant military power in Southeast Asia and exert economic influence globally, positioning itself as an alternative to the USA rather than aspiring to replicate the US model of military hegemony³⁶.

Given the disillusionment of developing countries with the leadership of Western nations, their perceived failure to effectively address global challenges, and their diminishing moral authority, China could capitalize on this and shape global governance according to its own rules and standards, potentially becoming a reference point for developing countries? This could potentially lead to a new form of hegemony with distinct Chinese characteristics?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Today, a new configuration of international relations is taking place, and the global challenge seems to be more pronounced than ever. Global actors have few common interests, different norms and values, and a lack of global vision. This has led to a world where competition and conflicts are re-emerging in a concerning manner, making the global population feel threatened in terms of their health and security.

Increasing competition and conflicts in different part of the globe, together with an increasing political fragmentation and lack of an efficient cooperation are jeopardizing the management of global public goods that as suggested by Stiglitz encompass tangible resources such as water, forests, and natural resources, as well as intangible factors like international security, economic stability, humanitarian aid, environmental protection, and the advancement of knowledge.

In this article, we have revisited three analytical paradigms to provide new insights for reconsidering effective global governance in managing the global commons: national interest, solidarity, and hegemony.

With increasing interdependence between states, the concept of national interest has evolved. States now need to engage in effective and constructive cooperation across crucial sectors to protect their national interests. This cooperation should extend beyond crises and short-term goals, aiming at strengthening relationships and address issues that concern all parties involved, as well as global issues and the management of global resources.

³⁵ YU, H. Reflections on the Belt and Road Initiative at Its 10th Anniversary. In: **Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative**. Asia in Transition, vol. 26, Springer, Singapore, 2024.

³⁶ DAMS, T. How China is pursuing a new world order among the geopolitical ruins. **Clingendael Publication**, 27 February 2024. Available at: <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/how-china-pursuing-new-world-order-among-geopolitical-ruins>.

Global governance is crucial; it is not just an option, but a political tool for working together to safeguard both worldwide and national interests.

The concept of solidarity, based on the idea of mutual and shared interests, has been developed from the idea proposed by the authors Emile Durkheim and Léon Bourgeois. This concept suggests that the effective operation of the entire system relies on the proper functioning of each part. Therefore, in an individualistic global system, individuals should act together with an attitude based at least on self-interested altruism, where global actors collaborate to prevent negative outcomes from affecting them. The long-term benefits of this approach to global governance are reassuring, offering confidence in a more stable and secure future.

The concept of hegemony, developed by Antonio Gramsci and further explored by scholars like Robert Cox, prompts us to consider the role of leadership in global governance. It raises the question of whether this leadership can be influenced by the dominant power or hegemonic power. Cox suggests that the hegemonic power establishes and maintain an order that aligns with the interests of others, rather than exploiting them. Currently, the USA can still be seen as the hegemonic power, but in a changing global landscape, China is challenging this position. China is still not prepared to take this place, but it is presenting new models of development and global governance to align its interests with those of other countries, particularly for global South countries.

In a time marked by significant global challenges, misunderstandings, competition among powers, and rising conflicts in different regions of the world, an exceptional level of mutual understanding and solidarity among nations and peoples is more necessary than ever. The question arises: Do we have the ability and desire to work together to build a more empathetic society?

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