

Time to Switch from Hegemony to Anti-Hegemony

Mainstream Media and Organic Views

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I. Hegemony

World War II (1937-1945) was a savage war and a tragedy for mankind, but its ending had a great impact on the termination of colonialism all over the world and on the creation of the United Nations. The United Nations was formally established in 1945, its charter was signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. The charter went into effect October 24, 1945. It was considered as an international treaty agreed upon by all signed nations. The charter codified the principles of international relations, from sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force in settling international affairs. The founding Charter has been later amended and annexed to the UN Charter in 1963, 1965, and 1973, principally defined as The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, and the UN functions in accordance with the statute of the International Court of Justice.

The end of World War II also created a division of the world into two factions, the West vs East or the Democracy Alliance vs the Communist Pact. Despite of the existence of the UN, where the confronting two groups are all members, the leaders the two groups, namely the U.S. and the Soviet Union have been pursuing a 'hegemony strategy to expand and lead its group. Therefore, we need to understand the definition of hegemony, then proceed to understand and analyze international relations.

Hegemony is derived from the Greek word hegemonic used to describe city-states. According to the dictionary, hegemony is defined as the dominance of one group (or state) over another. In today's perspective of international relations, hegemony describes a dominant position of a particular set of ideas or concepts inhibiting the articulation of opposing or alternative ideas. Anthony Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, used hegemony to explain the survival of the capitalist state among all advanced states in the West. Gramsci's analysis of hegemony thus involves observation and study of the ways in which such capitalist ideas are promoted and accepted as 'correct and normal'. A hegemonic class is one that is able to attain the consent of other social forces.

One of the most extensive applications of Gramsci's conception of hegemony has been in the analysis of international relations and the international political economy. In state-centred realist international relations analysis by some scholars, hegemony denotes the existence within the international system of a dominant state or group of states (for example G7), which maintains hegemony stability. Britain in the 19th century, the U.S. since 1945 and G7 since 1975 are examples. The hegemon has a self-interest in the preservation of the system and must be capable of maintaining the system's security with its military might. At the same time, the hegemon is responsible for the formulation of the rules that govern interaction within the international system – the so-called rule-based system.

John Mearsheimer at the University of Chicago, is perhaps the most effective illustrator of U.S. hegemony behavior. Prof. Mearsheimer has presented books, essays and speeches on hegemony theory.

The list of his more recent titles below can easily convince readers to understand and accept the U.S. hegemony: 1. Benign Hegemony, *International Studies Review* Advance Access, 3-2-2016; 2. The False Promise of Liberal Hegemony, Yale University, 11-22-2017, YouTube; 3. The Roots of Liberal Hegemony, Yale University, 11-22-2017, YouTube; 4. On Liberal Ideals and International Realities, 11-30-2017, parts 1-3; 5. The Case for Constraint, Yale Univ. 11-22-2017, YouTube; 6. The Great Delusion, book, 2018, presentation at the Bush School of Government and Politics, 10-16-2018; 7. The Great Delusions: Liberal Dreams and International Realities, SOSA, U. Of London, 1-24-2019; 8. The Great Delusion, Polisci Carleton, 2-13-2020; 9. Remake the World in America's Image, *International Relations and Politics*, 3-12-2022, YouTube; 10. Great Powers, U.S. Hegemony, and the Rise of China, YouTube, Manifold, 6-2-2022.

The U.S. hegemony behavior can be traced in its history from its independence to its later stages of expansion. The U.S. advocated the Monroe doctrine (1823) to secure its dominance in the Americas. After World War I and II, the U.S. has become a superpower. The U.S. hegemony behavior continued and eventually engaged in a confrontational Cold War with the Soviet Union. With the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a strategy of curtailing the Soviet Union's hegemony using economic sanctions and the arms race, the Soviet Union eventually collapsed in 1991. The U.S. hegemony strategy was successful and was directed at whoever challenged its dominance in the economy and world affairs. The Plaza Accord in 1987 was a clear example targeted at Japan because its growing economy was threatening the U.S. Similarly, the EU's expansion and growth were thwarted to reduce its threat to the U.S.

Entering the 21st century, China's rapid growth in its economy has maintained an impressive double-digit growth rate in GDP. In 2010, China surpassed Japan becoming the second-largest economy in the world. This not only surprised the U.S. but also challenged the U.S. hegemony. Hence, the U.S. has targeted China as a competitor, an 'enemy' in a relationship sense, with a policy to pivot back to Asia to contain China's growth. However, China is in a different category of nations in comparison to Japan or Germany. China is a much larger country than Japan or Germany in size, population, and resources. Despite the U.S. precaution, applying restrictions of supplying China with any high technology, China was able to rise as a great nation, lifting its people out of poverty, modernizing its infrastructure and military forces, and developing its economy as the Key manufacturer of the world becoming the principal trader with over 130 countries.

The present U.S.-China policy is not only hinged on the hegemony theory but also placed as the highest priority on the political platforms of both the Republican and Democratic Parties. Jointly they launch anti-China policy with hostile measures as a means to divert voters' attention away from the domestic issues the two parties are unable to solve, for example, the U.S. debt issue, the falling productivity problem, the drug and crime rate, the illegal immigrants, the healthcare and welfare burden severed by inflation. The U.S. started a trade war with China in 2018, subsequently initiated a technology sanction against China, and then orchestrated a semiconductor boycott aiming to cut off the world semiconductor supply chain from China. These measures may hurt China and offer a rallying point to U.S. allies but they do damage the U.S. semiconductor industry and the world economy. They also force China to develop its own supply chain for its giant market. These hysterical actions are all driven by the hegemony strategy assuming that China is a hegemon, and the U.S. can only maintain its superpower by being a hegemon.

II. Anti-Hegemony

The above description of hegemony theory has plenty of scholarly references. There is ample historical evidence (rise of empires) supporting the arguments of hegemony theory. A scholar like John Mearsheimer is the most vocal and convincing advocator of the hegemony theory characterizing the U.S. as a hegemon who is earnestly practicing the hegemony theory. In the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were both behaving like hegemon evidenced by their rhetorics and military expansions, for example, exhibited by the NATO and Warsaw pact (Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance, created on May 14, 1955). These two groups led by the U.S. (Western Bloc) and Soviet Union (Eastern Bloc) were engaging in a hegemony contest in the economy and arms race.

When the U.S. and Soviet Union were engaged in the Cold War, the world was divided into two camps led by two hegemons, each trying to expand its sphere of influence and win the arms race. The Soviet Union eventually failed in the contest and collapsed. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991, but the U.S.-led NATO did not dissolve. On the contrary, NATO kept expanding driven by hegemony ideals despite the fact that the Soviet Union was no longer in existence. When a big nation exercises hegemony strategy against a small target country, the small country had little chance to find a counterstrategy but accepts being pushed over or dominated. If a target country is a big nation, like Russia, it may choose a counterstrategy such as forming the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact to counter the United States and NATO waging a hegemon-to-hegemon confrontational rivalry.

One might then ask whether a big nation has a choice of selecting a different strategy (not a hegemony strategy) to deal with a hegemon. This question is very relevant as we analyze the present U.S.-China relations. The U.S. has been pursuing its hegemony strategy successfully since it obtained its independence from being a British colony. China, although not a colony, was a victim of the West hegemons by their hegemony behavior. The Chinese Revolution to establish a republic China was a treacherous undertaking (not so fortunate as the U.S. revolution) facing multiple hegemons trying to carve up and dominate China. Not like Japan, China did not want to be a hegemon or copy the West's hegemon behavior. China suffered throughout the two world wars, nearly being conquered by the vicious Japanese imperial army. However, China, with perseverance, defeated the hegemony of Japan after nearly one decade-long devastating and atrocious war.

Post WW II, a bipolar hegemony world was formed and led by the two hegemons, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. China was unfortunately caught by the hegemony rivalry and became separated into two parts across the Taiwan Strait each part supported by a hegemon. Mainland China was backed by the Soviets and Taiwan was backed by the U.S. They were not colonies of the hegemons; the two governments, led by CCP and KMT, tried to focus on the economy with the goal to reunite someday. But they were solicited into the rhetorics of the two camps of the Cold War. As a big nation, mainland China was able to act more independently from the hegemon's influence. For example, Chairman Mao distanced China from Stalin's communist bloc. As described above, the Soviet Union eventually collapsed. With the Soviet Union as a historical lesson, Mainland China had selected its own strategy to deal with the U.S. and Russia. China's strategy may not be clear to the West, but it is clear to Chinese people that it is a different strategy. The strategy is to avoid confrontation so as not to fall into the Thucydides Trap, a Greek story of hegemony rivalry. China advocates peace and cooperative development. China's military effort is anti-hegemony, with no expansion of military bases on foreign soil, pledging never to use nuclear weapon on non-nuclear countries, vowing never to be the first to use a nuclear weapon, etc. Under the current U.S.-China policy, clearly following a hegemony strategy, will China adopt its hegemony strategy to counter the U.S.? Will China be the next Soviet Union? Or

will the two big nations destroy each other with nuclear weapons? Or is there an anti-hegemony theory or strategy for China to adopt?

This author would like to argue that China is practicing an anti-hegemony theory, which can be deduced from China's diplomatic behavior and its historical records. In fact, based on the thousands of years of Chinese history, for example, the period of Chun Qiu Zhan Guo, China was divided into many states. Hegemony and anti-hegemony theory were practiced within China except they were not articulated with today's terminology. However, there were many political philosophers prescribing strategies dealing with aggressive hegemons, many essays had been written by ancient Chinese scholars such as Kong Zi (Confucius, Rujia thoughts) and Sun Zi (Sun Bin, Strategy of War). These scholars argued that the best strategy was diplomacy and the worst strategy was war. We can use the ancient theories to deduce an anti-hegemony theory applicable to today's hegemon rivalry. The history books showed us that there were many ways to deal with hegemony strategy, even though the term anti-hegemony was never used. Chinese like to use plain language to describe complex subjects, for example, *huo lai shui dang* and *shui la tu yan*, which means if attacked by fire, we use water to quench it, if attacked by water we use soil to stop it. These verses are anti-hegemony philosophy, very different from hegemon-to-hegemon rivalry based on "bite against bite" and "eye to eye".

China is a big nation with 1.4 billion people, the number one populated country in the world. This population contains at least 56 ethnic groups galvanized over thousands of years under a unique philosophy of "welcoming and absorbing incoming people to live harmoniously together". The Chinese people believe in *Shi Jie Da Tong* (Harmonious World), people can live peacefully as a society, developing common customs and yet preserving unique differences. Thus, through thousands of years, China grew in population by absorbing incoming people whether they were invaders or refugees. Hence, all Chinese are more or less molded to look alike (The Westerners can never tell Hong Kong, Taiwan or any mainlander apart). In greetings, the Chinese always ask people whether they have had a meal?. If not, come to his house or a restaurant. These are all anti-hegemony spirits.

The Chinese absorb and share their common languages, literature and customs while keeping their unique dialects and cultures (especially foods). This is a unique galvanizing process that has absorbed 'Han', 'Man', 'Mongol', 'Muslim', and 'Tibetans', ...into the Chinese race. The hegemon tried very hard to create color revolutions in China but never succeeded; this is one example of anti-hegemony force working in China. Another example, the Japanese could never rule and convert people in Taiwan into Japanese but the Japanese citizens left behind in Taiwan after Japan's surrender in WW II became Chinese thoroughly today. Japan does have a strong racial discrimination but not the Chinese. In ancient times, China offered marriage to northern barbarians in order to keep a peace treaty, another example of anti-hegemony action. Inter-racial marriages are common place in China.

China never invaded others. (The Mongolians' invasion into the West occurred before they became absorbed and converted to Chinese.) China as a big nation with the most advanced maritime technology (in the 14th to 15th century or earlier) could have easily conquered Japan, Korea, Okinawa, or Indonesia, but China never did. China built the Great Wall to fend off invaders instead. China explored the world and visited America before Columbus. These are pieces of evidence to show that China does not practice hegemony, rather, China has anti-hegemony in its genes. Analyzing today's U.S.-China relations, one can follow the above analysis and logic to say that it is a pure mistake to target China as an enemy and treat China as a hegemon. The U.S. has practiced hegemony theory for too long and too successfully, thus, it thinks that everyone else will react and behave like a hegemon. The prevailing view is that a hegemon must win, or it will be replaced, but we have never entertained that there is an anti-hegemony theory.

Whatever China is doing in military is defensive and reactionary, a simple deduction from causality principle. When Pelosi insisted on visiting Taiwan, challenging the One China principle (The U.S. and China had agreed when they established diplomatic relations). China's protest with military exercise is an anti-hegemony act. It was clearly a reaction to a provocative diplomatic move, how could the U.S. blame China to be a hegemon threatening the U.S.? Only when the U.S. is threatening China first, for example, patrolling naval vessels in the South China Sea (SCS) near China's sovereign islands, China would then react and make defensive move. China's development of SCS islands or constructing its naval vessels were understandable natural reaction to the U.S. provocation (a hegemon behavior). China developed the nuclear bomb out of the fear that the U.S. may use nuclear bomb against China during the Korean war. (Such thoughts were indeed entertained by the U.S. then.) After China succeeded in the development of atomic bomb, it announced to the world it will never use the nuclear bomb first and will never use the nuclear bomb on any country with no nuclear weapon. This author would suggest that the above China behavior is simply anti-hegemony behavior.

Similarly, when China was barred from the space research program led by the U.S., China then decided to have its own program. Today, China was able to put a space station in space all by itself, it should not be interpreted as a threat, rather the U.S. should welcome China to join the U.S.-led space club for the benefit of mankind. The U.S. should realize from China's rise (not by hegemony) that the U.S. hegemony strategy is no longer a sure-win strategy against a big productive China. If the targeted nation also applies hegemony strategy, the odds may be best 50:50 to win or likely to experience mutual destruction from nuclear weapons. The national strategists must recognize that there is an anti-hegemony theory. The U.S. should recognize that and switch its own strategy to anti-hegemony. It is obvious that if two great nations are practicing an anti-hegemony strategy, there will be no mutual destruction but only win-win opportunities.

III. Is Russia-Ukraine War a Hegemony War?

Most people, especially people from the West, would say that the Soviet Union was a hegemon, however, fewer people would openly say that the U.S. was also a hegemon. But the fact is that the U.S. has always been a hegemon throughout its history since its independence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was set back giving up many territories that were part of the Soviet Union. Whether Russia had given up its hegemony strategy or not would be judged by its future behavior. The U.S. as described above had maintained its hegemony strategy by keeping NATO in an expansion mood. Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union was trying to take a different course by focusing on its economic woes and joining the EU even seeking the NATO alliance. But the U.S. and NATO did not trust Russia, instead, they were expanding the NATO alliance to include more former Soviet Union members posing a serious threat to Russia.

Since 1949, NATO has increased its membership from 12 founding members to 30 countries through eight rounds of enlargement. The latest was the Republic of North Macedonia to join the Alliance on 27 March 2020. In addition, five partner countries have declared their aspirations to join NATO including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Sweden, and Ukraine. Russia naturally felt the threat of NATO. Back In 2014, a regime change event in Ukraine ousted Ukrainian president, Victor Yanukovich on 22 February 2014 which sparked pro-Russian demonstrations the next day against the incoming new government. This triggered Russia's action of returning Crimea to Russia. Russian troops captured Crimea and installed the pro-Russia government through a referendum and Declaration of Independence. Russia formally incorporated Crimea on 18 March 2014. One may consider Russia's

action as hegemony behavior but one cannot ignore the fact that the expansion of NATO and subsequent regime change in Ukraine were also hegemony behavior making Russia feel threatened.

Ukraine is a neighbor of Russia having a long border and a substantial population of Russian-speaking citizens. The new pro-U.S. Ukraine government was suppressing Russian-speaking citizens and facing an eight-year-long internal war. Its desire to become a NATO member was not acceptable to Russia. On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine justified by supporting the independence declaration of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in Donbas. The invasion is certainly a hegemony behavior, but again the hidden cause was the U.S.-led NATO threat, its continuing expansion and closer to Russian borders. Russia may have had the intention to take an anti-hegemony strategy to counter the U.S.-NATO hegemony strategy earlier on but in the end, it resorted to a counter-hegemony strategy. According to Mearsheimer's assessment, since Russia only mobilized 190,000 troops to invade Ukraine, it was clear that Russia did not intend to conquer Ukraine. However, the U.S. and NATO had assumed otherwise and were prepared to prolong the war as if Russia would conquer Ukraine. How would the war end is hard to predict at this point, but the potential of leading to a nuclear war is very high, when the two nuclear countries, the U.S. and Russia, are locking heads in a hegemony conflict.

China has maintained a neutral position on the Russia-Ukraine war, China is stressing a diplomatic solution despite the pressure from the U.S. urging every nation to join it in sanctioning Russia and supporting Ukraine. China's perspective is based on an anti-hegemony approach. China does not see the need for NATO, never mind its expansion. The U.S. is applying a hegemony strategy towards China, treating China as a hegemony enemy, China must react in an anti-hegemony manner or counter with a hegemony strategy. The author's view is that China has always been practicing anti-hegemony theory, but the U.S. has maintained its hegemony strategy towards everyone including Russia and China. The current Russia-Ukraine war and the U.S.-China competition are pushing the world to a dangerous breaking point of global destruction. The major actors, especially the U.S. must make a serious reflection and reevaluate its national strategy.

The Russia-Ukraine war did not have to be a hegemony war. Russia might be persuaded to withdraw if Ukraine would agree not to join NATO and the U.S.-NATO would stop its expansionary hegemony strategy. The crux of the matter is whether the U.S. will ever give up its hegemony policy. The Russian-Ukraine war and the U.S.-China confrontation are seemingly separated affairs but they are actually intertwined, since they are testing the U.S. for the first time whether it can maintain its hegemony strategy.

IV. Time to Switch from Hegemony to Anti-Hegemony

Hegemony is an aggressive practice not justified between big nations with nuclear power. A confrontational hegemony conflict may favor a large country against a small nation, but between two comparable great nations, there is no sure winner but more likely mutual destruction. As discussed above, the U.S. has been successful with its hegemony behavior for seven decades to become a superpower. Now it is facing a fast-rising China with an economy equals 80% of the U.S. economy. With China's GDP growth rate at double or more of the U.S. growth rate, China's economy will soon surpass that of the U.S. Fortunately, China is a very different country from the U.S. and Russia. China's rise was clearly not achieved by a hegemon's path or strategy like the U.S. The author must point out one different viewpoint from Mearsheimer's hegemony theory; that is, Mearsheimer considers every rising power a hegemon, including China. The author believes in the existence of the anti-hegemony

theory and feels certain that there is evidence in China's history and its present deeds to support that belief.

In Ancient China, it did have internal wars and dynasty changes, but it did not launch invasive wars on foreign countries. Many small or peripheral states would voluntarily join China and China would offer gifts, aids even marriages to maintain peace and friendly relations with them. This anti-hegemony trait had helped China to transcend thousands of years. In modern history, China was invaded and became a victim for more than a century, but China demonstrated its resilience and came back quickly to show that the Chinese culture is rich and superior and that Chinese people are intelligent, diligent and peace-loving. Just examine China's relations with its neighbors, Russia, Korea, Japan, India, Vietnam, Philippines, etc., China never initiated any war with any neighbor to conquer territories. China always resorted to peaceful diplomacy and negotiation. China will only fight invaders and aggressors following its anti-hegemony philosophy.

The U.S. has no reason to target China. China is tens of thousand of miles away posing no threat to the U.S. The hegemony threat is the other way around with the U.S. against China. For example, plotting an island chain to curtail China, creating a five-eye alliance to watch China and Russia, forming AUKUS and QUAD+ to counter China, and even moving NATO to Asia to pressure China, are all hegemony threats to China. The U.S. is making a huge mistake to treat an anti-hegemony country as a hegemon. Just reflecting on the U.S.-China policy (interfering with Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan - all of China's sovereignty), it is so clear that it is a hegemony strategy targeting China. China is a large productive anti-hegemony nation. The prospect of the U.S. (against China) hegemony policy is not good at all; economically, China is rising faster, technologically, China is gaining faster, and militarily China is advancing faster. China has more productive people and better infrastructure support compared to the U.S. Fortunately, China is not a hegemon at least not in the military sense. China is a large trade partner with over 130 countries but that is because of its productivity, not military might.

The U.S. think tanks are locked in by legacy reasoning, we should think from causality principles rather than blindly believing that China as a communist country will doom to fail. China has a long history and deep philosophy, particularly in governance and political theorems. China borrowed Marxism to start a revolution and toppled the Qing dynasty, but the Chinese communist party is a reformer as exhibited by its policies and five-year development plans. China uses simple language to motivate citizens and deliver promises, for example, Mao's thoughts on Marxism for China (necessity of revolution and nationalism), Deng's feeling the stones to cross the river (to make safe and steady progress to develop economy), three representations (Jiang's definition and expectation of Chinese Communist party), Science leading development (Hu's scientific perspective guiding socio-economic development), and socialism with Chinese characteristics (Xi's thoughts on reform, innovation and new China). The Chinese communist party can mobilize a huge population to pursue its goals. We can recognize the efficiency of the the Chinese government despite corruptions they are now trying to clean up.

The U.S. must accept China's anti-hegemony behavior as an advantage to it. The U.S. should never apply a hegemony strategy to force China to become a hegemon. Russia presents a lesson at hand. The U.S. hegemony strategy has forced Russia to adopt a counter-hegemony strategy (resulting in the Crimea war and Ukraine war). We might not know for sure whether Russia would ever be an anti-hegemon, but we could almost be certain that the current hegemon-to-hegemon confrontation might bring us close to a nuclear war. As articulated above, China is an anti-hegemon and prefers to stay as an anti-hegemon. The U.S. should be glad that it might still have a chance to work with China as an anti-hegemon for mutual benefits and for the benefit of the world. Once two big nations engage in a

hegemon-to-hegemon rivalry, it will be difficult to avoid a dangerous war. Some national security strategists recognize the importance of guardrail, dialog, and diplomacy, but we must understand that guardrail and diplomacy will not be effective in the hegemony relationship. The Biden Administration seems to believe that they can play diplomacy on the one hand and act as a hegemon on the other hand towards China. (Seeking meetings and dialog and shooting balloons down with mean rhetoric at the same time.) In reality, this kind of double-faced approach can only wear out China's patience to remain an anti-hegemon.