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**WEAPONIZING ANTI-AMERICANISM: THE CONCEPT OF “HEGEMONY”  
IN RUSSIAN RHETORIC POLICY.**

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## INTRODUCTION

One understands the world through the lens of text. It is our way of making sense of things. (Derrida & Moore, 1974, p.61) In this work, we will make sense of the meaning of the term "hegemony." One can not get to know the other person's thoughts, yet one can analyze how he articulates those thoughts. (Barthes, 1976) To produce worthwhile inquiries, one should stand by certain philosophical assumptions. Core assumption of this work in relation to text can be summarized via a quote from James Scotland. "There is no ultimate truth as multiple interpretations are available for any given situation." (Scotland, 2009)

This research is based on two different realms of thought. The first part of the research will be devoted to the history of meaning-making in international relations and the political science scholar community. The second part will analyze Vladimir Putin's communication as a Russian Federation representative. After completing these two tasks, the meaning-making of the term "hegemony" articulated by Putin will be compared with different concepts introduced by the scholar community. The motivation is to inquire why the speeches of Vladimir Putin make sense to a particular audience and how the scholarly discourse enabled it to be so.

To work with text, one needs interpretive tools, as the sheer collection of sounds or letters can not be involved in meaning-making. Textual analysis is a method powered by a particular scholar's experience and actions. Consequently, we acknowledge the limitations of the inquiry, which include: a shortage of sources, preconceived approach, and personal ontological biases. Nevertheless, starting a discussion with an amateur examination can be fruitful for further research on the topic.

### ***Relevance:***

Many "Western" scholars, journalists, and politicians agreed that Putin's speeches are internally contradictory, manipulative, and hypocritical. Nevertheless, the thought that they don't make sense to everyone is deceptive. His speeches indeed make sense to leaders of BRICS, neorealist political science scholars, and a considerable part of radical parties across Europe. (Hill, 2022) (Bond, 2023) The term "hegemony" is inherently popular among those who tolerate Putin's speeches. For example, the Chinese Ministry

of Foreign Affairs published an entire article that deconstructs so-called "American Hegemony." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chinese People's Republic website, 2023). The official website of the President of the Russian Federation provides twelve articles that include the term "hegemony" dating from 24 February 2022. The word has been noted only fifteen times throughout the previous twenty-two years. (President of Russia website, 2022) One can assume a direct correlation between the usage of the term and the scale of political confrontations between Russia and "the West." In our term work, we attempted to identify the meaning of "the West" as it is articulated via official Russian channels. "Hegemony" was chosen as it is equally popular among the scholar community and anti-globalist public policy. (Stephen, 2009) In both parties, it shares vaguely adverse connotations and is usually associated with "the West." (Owen, 2020, p.809) Since the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, **scholar interest** in Putin's discursive policy has increased. Particularly important were academic discussions on whether realist scholars predicted the Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine. (Specter, 2023) (Ross Smith, 2023) Of particular interest is a debate between structural realists and neoclassical realists which revolves around whether the invasion was justified. Many scholars of the Liberal school criticized, in particular, John Mearsheimer as a scholar who intentionally provides scholarly justifications for illiberal actions. (Ross Smith, 2023).

***Aim:*** One performs the research in a particular social environment. This fact defines the limitations of one's reach.

The research would cover three main parts of the subject:

1. Introduction and transformation of the concept in academic international relations.
2. The usage of the concept by the President of the Russian Federation.
3. The inquiry into which basic assumptions are present in Putin's articulation of the term "hegemony." Later comparison of these assumptions with schools of thought engendered them.

Such a cohesive approach is needed to outline and reach "hegemonic" discourse in Putin's public speeches. In accordance with the theoretical framework - we do not aim to analyze what Putin understands by "hegemony." The **aim is to inquire** how the meanings of

"hegemony" presented by the scholar community correspond to those articulated by Vladimir Putin.

The research is grounded in the belief that various actors in International Relations share basic assumptions immanent in Vladimir Putin's speeches. Thereby, **the thesis** is that Putin instrumentalized several assumptions from mainstream political science discourse, which are constituted in the term "hegemony," to achieve mutual understanding with various international relations actors critical of United States policies.

**Object:** Objects of inquiry include international relations scholar works on "hegemony" and speeches of Vladimir Putin, which include his articulation of "hegemony."

**Subject:** The subject of the research would be numerous representations of the term "hegemony" provided by notable actors.

**Structure:** The research comprises an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of sources, and an annotation. In the introduction, one can find the research's aim, subject, object, structure, theory, and methodology. The main part of the work consists of:

1. Chapter I: Cohesive overview of the theoretical foundations for the work, list of definitions for frequently used terms, and rationale behind the methodology involved.
2. Chapter II: The second part involves a genealogical analysis of the concept of "hegemony." It analyzes the process of its engendering in the works of Antonio Gramsci. Subsequently, we discover its transformation in Marxist, realist, English school, and liberal scholar discourses. It ends with a conclusion which analyzes the transformation of the concept.
3. Chapter III: The third part involves textual and discourse analysis of the usage of "hegemony" in Russian and Chinese publications. Firstly, textual analysis of all the quotes involving the term "hegemony" in speeches of Vladimir Putin since the start of the full-scale invasion is introduced. Subsequently, there is a comparative textual analysis of mentioned statements. The final part concludes the examination of intertextual links between theoretical frameworks and Russian articulations of "hegemony."

In conclusion, we sum up the work, provide research results, and list questions that should be inquired in subsequent works.

## **CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING THE CONCEPT OF “HEGEMONY” AND ITS USE IN PUBLIC DISCOURSES**

### **1.1. Describing theoretical foundations which guide the research:**

To produce a meaningful impact, one should hold basic philosophical assumptions. Here are listed and substantiated particular philosophical principles which are held true.

#### **1.1.1. Constructivism**

This work holds constructivism as a central paradigm for understanding social processes. Constructivism argues that specific social actors and forces shape concepts according to their values and beliefs. In this paper, the process of meaning-shaping will be highlighted and emphasized by the coexistence of different meanings attached to one concept. Constructivism in International Relations denies the substantive meaning of any act. Therefore, any action should be analyzed in context, and the context is socially formed by previously invested meanings. (Wendt, 1995, p.72)

Another critical assumption is the belief that knowledge, in its essence, is political. It is depicted by Jens Bartelson in his quote: "If knowledge is understood as a system for the formation of valid statements, all knowledge is knowledge by differentiation, and this differentiation is a political activity." (Bartelson, 1995, p.5)

#### **1.1.2. Post-structuralism**

Post-structuralism complements constructivism by claiming that multiplicity is immanent to any concept. It states that one should constantly challenge a priori assumptions. This is crucial as the post-structuralist theory is the only one under which a method of genealogical research would make sense. (Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2008, p.378) The genealogical analysis can make sense once it treats a subject's existence in the context of the outer social world. (Foucault, 1980, p.77) Subsequently, individuals and their actions should be analyzed as products of power relations. (Foucault, 1980, p.78).

This work also bases on the ethical approach named by John Vasquez as "exposing the choice posing as truth" (Vasquez, 1995, p.217). Consequently, contexts in which the term "hegemony" was put and which consequences it brought would be exposed. The

assumption of the existence of "hegemony" will also be challenged to analyze how the concept behind it was formed. This is needed for the implementation of the research and does not reflect nor define the research results.

## **1.2. List of necessary definitions which are frequently used in the research**

It is assumed it is essential to provide definitions that will be used throughout this research, as it will limit the possibility of misinterpretation. The central word "hegemony" would be omitted, as the entire second chapter would be dedicated to its genealogy.

**Genealogy** - "In IR, genealogy is typically employed to analyze how agents and structures are constituted within historically and culturally specific sites, by drawing attention to contingency and, especially, the productive power of discourse." (Vucetic, 2011). Here, one would use a genealogical method to inquire "how?" The concept of "hegemony" became intrinsically linked to the USA and subsequently used in anti-American policies of Russia.

**Discourse** - "A discourse is a particular way of representing some part of the (physical, social, psychological) world – there are alternative and often competing discourses associated with different groups of people in different social positions." (Fairclough, 2003) Discourses are seen as realms of discussion that produce different representations of parts of the social world.

**Narrative** - "Narrative refers to the way in which disparate facts and events about the world are woven together to make sense of historical, economic, social, and political conditions, often defined as "realities." Narratives often claim to be accounts of the world as reality, but the same events may be constructed and interpreted in contradictory ways, producing competing narratives (Suganami, 2008, p.330)." This way, each narrative is constructed and thus can be deconstructed. Once we identify a narrative, there is no need to claim its overall falsity. More critical is outlining the truth and connecting it to the causes for which it was framed this way.

**Rhetoric policy** - I would use this term to refer to a realm of rules, assumptions, and topics which unite Putin's speeches. I will use it to outline presidential speeches as an instrument used to achieve a state's goals in International Relations.



### **1.3. Overview of the methodologies and explanations for their use**

The methodology should reflect the aims one follows in his work. Thus, one needs to use various methods to pursue comprehensive analysis.

#### **1.3.1. Genealogy**

Each time a person engages in making statements about the world - he participates in a meaning-making process. The word can only make sense if one uses the context to unravel it. One needs to borrow context from another social event to represent a social event. Genealogy is a qualitative research tool that allows for historicizing social items. Genealogy is utilized to make a chronological look at a transformation of the concept, which took place in a specific social environment. (Vucetic, 2011) The transformation of the term "hegemony" in scholarly discourse, primarily International Relations, since Antonio Gramsci's introduction is examined. Genealogy tries to analyze how a social item became possible or prominent and examines its consequences for the respective social environment. (Vucetic, 2011)

One realizes the limitations of the method. Bartelson wrote in his book "genealogy of Sovereignty": "If genealogy is critical, it is not because it permits us to judge the present from a point outside history, but because it permits us to cut the present down to size within it." (Bartelson, 1995) Therefore, one dismisses the idea in which one objectively makes sense of the transformation, but instead, one tries to stick with it by looking at history. Another limitation is the scope of the research. A more cohesive genealogical study would need content analysis of numerous issued literature.

Nevertheless, it is believed that even under the scope of university term work, one can sharpen methodology for further research.

The genealogical research will be divided into five parts. The first one would analyze the Marxist school and its transition to international relations. Second, the text would concentrate on the realist school. The third one would examine the English School of international relations. Fourth would provide an introduction to the liberal school of international relations. It would be summed up by the fifth part, which would make sense of the transformation of the term.

### 1.3.2. Textual analysis

In positivist terms, discourse is a collection of statements. (Fairclough, 2003) Thus the object of discourse analysis would be some logically connected proclamations. To proceed with discourse analysis, one needs to make sense of statements with textual analysis. The Administration of the President of the Russian Federation website would be used in our research. On the website, articles which include the term "hegemony" and were issued since 24 February 2022 would be accessed. (Putin, 2022) This will limit our scope to a timeline in which Russo-Western relations surpassed a barrier that held them from direct blaming. All the quotes from the article in the underlined font would be provided. Subsequently, the quotes would be analyzed using a textual analysis method by Norman Fairclough. This method implies the division of the sentence into three parts. The first one is action - here, one examines how the author positions himself in relation to the audience. In the part of representation, one analyzes the sense of the social item in relation to social situations; one looks for intertextual references, synonyms, hyponyms, dichotomies, and other tools for meaning-making. The final part is identification; it examines how the author positions himself toward the social event he represents. (Fairclough, 2003).

Subsequently, one analyzes quotes as a cohesive piece of text via the checklist provided by Fairclough. This method includes questions over eleven issues that are used to make sense of the text. The social event segment is focused on determining the social event which contains this text. Genre is aimed at analyzing which pre-existent social conditions shaped the form of the text. The next part examines how the author uses differences in relation to subjects. The intertextuality part finds direct and indirect references to other pieces of text. The Assumption part attempts to decipher the basic assumptions upon which the derivative opinions are formed. The subsequent segment looks at semantic and grammatical relations between clauses and sentences. The next part is focused on exchanges, speech functions, and grammatical mood. It is continued by an inquiry into discourses that were cited or referenced. A part also focuses on the representation of social events in the text. Style is aimed at finding the relation between the author and the narrative. Modality assesses authors' representation of facts based on assumed factuality.

The final part deals with the system of evaluation, which is encrypted into text by the speaker. (Fairclough, 2003).

In this chapter, the guiding theoretical frameworks were described. The basic assumptions that constructivism and post-structuralism hold true were explained. Ethical principles and the limitations of theories were depicted. Subsequently, the use of genealogy and textual analysis as methods for the research were described. The use of the qualitative methodology in the inquiry of analyzing speeches was justified and a short summary of the specific method of textual analysis was written.

## **CHAPTER II: THE GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE TERM “HEGEMONY” AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE**

### **2.1. A list of the schools of political science which engaged in meaning-making of the term “hegemony”**

The original meaning of "hegemony" is linked to the Greek "hegemonia," which means "leadership" or "domination." Yet, this pure usage of the term was rethought in the most important work, which examined its meaning. Antonio Gramsci, in his "Prison Notes," created a notion of "cultural hegemony" to start with the phenomenological meaning of the term, one needs to analyze it properly. (Gramsci, 2011)

Nevertheless, Gramsci never gave a comprehensive definition of "hegemony" and "culture bloc" by the sheer form of his work, which consisted of notes; it wasn't an exhaustive text but instead a stream of thoughts. (Gramsci, 2011) Thus, we need to examine works that make sense of Gramscian theory to chase the transformation of the term.

#### **2.1.1. Marxism**

##### *1. Rudi Dutschke/Herbert Marcuse*

In 1968 Rudi Dutschke coined the slogan "Long March Through The Institutions" - this implied the importance of left-wing activists gaining positions in all spheres of state apparatus and changing it from within. Herbert Marcuse popularized this idea with such meaning - "working against the established institutions while working within them, but not simply by 'boring from within,' rather by 'doing the job', learning." (Marcuse, 2010) This idea is based on the Gramscian "war of position" concept. It argues that to counter the hegemony of the bourgeoisie; one needs to take away from their control over the culture. (Gramsci, 2011) In this sense bourgeoisie is the "hegemon" because it has the positions which give them power over the spread of information, the narratives portrayed through art, laws, and the constitution.

##### *2. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe*

In 1985 Laclau and Mouffe rethought the concept of “hegemony” in poststructuralist categories. The novelty was their post-positivist approach which denied the existence of the objective truth, an assumption that was crucial to classical Marxism. (Townshend, 2004) By redefining Marxism on poststructuralist principles, they argued that class structure isn’t innate to society; they blurred the line between “base/superstructure” and allowed superstructure to influence base. These radical changes were also seen in their perception of hegemony: it became a contingent power play between “normative” and “ethical” principles. (Townshend, 2004) Thus, by denying the objective character of Marxist theory, Laclau and Mouffe dismissed the totality inherent to hegemonic culture.

### 3. *David Harvey*

David Harvey amplifies the understanding of hegemony by focusing on a particular system - neoliberalism.

4. "Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse, and has pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way we interpret, live in and understand the world." (Harvey, 2006) For Harvey, it's an idea that can get a hegemonic status, and around there are people and institutions who'll profit the most. Harvey also analyzes the way the picture is promoted. For him, the main perpetrators are the corporate capitalist class which acted through state actors in the 70's USA. (Harvey, 2007) They created self-supporting institutions which maintain neoliberal hegemony: international organizations, think tanks (which outweigh academia), and corporate media. (Harvey, 2007) Harvey's ideas are particularly interesting as they became a canvas for anti-Americanism worldwide and were appropriated by anti-globalist discourse.

### 5. *Robert Cox*

Robert Cox was a Marxist thinker who introduced basic Gramscian assumptions to International Relations. Cox sees the hegemony of a particular state as a continuation of the hegemony of a class. This broad coalition is called a "historic block," several groups that together implement control over three main variables: ideas, material capabilities, and institutions. (Cox & Sinclair, 1996) These variables are interrelated, and a historic block appears from their valid combination. Ideas are needed to solve uprising problems

and form a dominant theoretical framework. Institutions continue preserving the main ideas by stimulating them in places where they haven't been present yet and controlling their implementation in areas where ideas have already become dominant. Material capabilities are needed to support two ways of ensuring the dominance of ideas: popularization (consent) and force (coercion). For Marxist theory, consent is crucial, as it can be much more effective than coercion. (Konrad, 2012, p.3) They don't underestimate the importance of force, yet they highlight that the state in which a particular idea becomes "common sense" will naturally lead to strengthening its position. In contrast, the force is a last-choice instrument for those struggling. Thus, for Cox, the hegemon is the power that could introduce their values and morals to subordinate classes, thus making them "universal." (Cox & Sinclair, 1996) Then, by establishing itself as a champion of universal values, a hegemon can influence other actors through international organizations. These organizations ensure consent among subordinates and coerce renegades if needed. (Konrad, 2012).

#### 6. *Immanuel Wallerstein*

Immanuel Wallerstein was a macro-sociologist who played a vital role in forming new Marxist discourse at the end of the 20th century. Wallerstein developed a methodology called "world-system analysis," which assumed that the world functions as a complete structural system called "world capitalism." (Wallerstein, 2020) He defined "hegemony" as a distinct situation in the "world-economy" characterized by a sharp edge between the efficiency of means of production between one actor and the others. (Wallerstein, 1983)

### 2.1.2. Realism

#### 7. *Hans Morgenthau*

Hans Morgenthau introduced the realist school of International Relations with his thorough overview of the sphere in "Politics Among Nations". He also was the first realist thinker to define hegemony. In his view, it was a situation in which one state or a coalition of states is so preponderant in power that it can dominate all others and control the direction and development of international politics. (Morgenthau, 1967, p.207) This definition attributes "hegemony" to states or a coalition of states rather than to social

class. It also emphasizes power - a "hegemon" dominates other states and controls interactions between them through military superiority. Morghentau's basic assumption is the innate desire of states to gain power. (Morghentau, 1967) Following this fundamental logic - hegemony is one of the most probable outcomes of the power struggle. The alternative for hegemony is "equilibrium" among states, in which no state is powerful enough to dominate others. (Morghentau, 1967) Morghentau see's benefits in both outcomes: hegemony can provide a base for stable institutions and values, thus reducing the risk of conflict. Still, in his view, a struggle for hegemony is a source of potential conflict and instability. (Morghentau, 1967)

#### 8. *Kenneth Waltz*

Waltz, the most notable author of neorealism, starts a trend that prefers the "balance of power" over hegemony. (Waltz, 2010, p.126) In his view, even though a hegemon can provide stability, it is a risky system, as it's based on adequate domestic policy. (Waltz, 2010) In case of instability in both domestic and foreign affairs, the hegemon risks destroying the entire International Relations system with him. The "balance of power" concept is preferable for Waltz as it allows states to pursue various individual policies, which should check aggressive tendencies in the system. (Waltz, 2010) This idea is based on the "European orchestra," which presumably provided stability on the continent throughout the 19th century. (Waltz, 2010)

#### 9. *John Mearsheimer*

John Mearsheimer continued realist critique of hegemony in his work "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics." His main thesis is an inevitable security dilemma that other states would face once one state becomes a hegemon. (Mearsheimer, 2001) In his view, the inability to know other states' intentions will ultimately lead to an arms race. If one state starts to arm up, other states will follow his example, as they can not be sure it wasn't done against them. This leads to a vicious circle in which every state needs to arm, and the armament facilitates the beginning of the conflict. Thus, for Mearsheimer, the global hegemon would eventually confront its potential successor - the so-called Thucydides trap. (Mearsheimer, 2001) Such fundamental logic makes Mearsheimer a critic of American foreign policy and a champion of isolationism. In his view, the only possible

way to escape hegemony is regional hegemony, a renamed concept of "sphere of influence." This means that to reduce the dominance of one state, every state should get an exclusive influence over its region and stop striving to expand it. (Mearsheimer, 2001)

### **2.1.3. English School**

#### *10. Martin Wight*

Martin Wight was looking at International Relations theory through lenses of history. Thus, his looks represent the particular determinism he noted when inquiring into the history of hegemony. English School theoreticians deny the inevitability of anarchy in International Relations; they traditionally see the crucial role of ideas over material resources in determining the flow of history. (Watson, 2007) And to find the ideas, one should focus on studying interactions between states in the International System. This concept includes all states with a specific rate of interactions between themselves. Wight argued that "hegemony" is a repeated scenario over the years in European history; he listed a series of international systems, which all were followed by "hegemonic" empires. He was pessimistic about his contemporary Europe and argued that it would also transfer to a "hegemonic" system. He also divided the system into "hegemonical" and "suzerain"; this is important because it answers the question of willingfullness. For Wight, the suzerain system is where actors directly agree with the dominant position of a specific actor due to its material, spiritual, or any other power. On the contrary, hegemonic power can create rules, norms, and values beneficial to itself and thereby influence the decisions of other actors without being recognized as a legitimate authority. (Watson, 2007)

### **2.1.4. Liberalism**

#### *11. Robert Keohane & Joseph Nye*

Keohane was a prominent neo-liberal IR thinker who wrote on the role of "hegemony." Keohane's basic assumptions were that the IR is a positive sum game and that economic issues can be more important than security. Such an outlook helped him to challenge the realistic perspective on "hegemony." Keohane saw a "hegemon" as a power that controls



resources, capital, and markets and possesses a competitive advantage in the production of high-value goods. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

A major neoliberal repulsion was the book "Power and Interdependence" co-authored by R. Keohane and J. Nye. This book rethought the concept of "hegemony" and denied its practical implementation. They created an alternative theory to describe the current reality - "complex interdependence". (Keohane & Nye, 1989) This idea made its way to subsequent beyond-the-state analysis. Complex interdependence theory highlighted numerous links between societies which are parallel to the Westphalian state. The primary example was one of the transnational organizations, which worked by rules of supply and demand, frequently omitting their state's origin interests. Another example could be volunteer organizations that united on shared goals and principles, diminishing state influence on societies in particular aspects. Once Keohane and Nye overcame the limit of state-centered research, it became possible to claim that such interdependence can itself be a factor in preventing war. These transnational links influence each state's domestic audience and therefore blur the line between domestic and foreign policy. (Dirzauskaite & Ilinca, 2017) This, in respect, leads to a system of regulations that aims to prevent the use of the military in conflicts. Naturally, such a system empowers diplomacy and, by that means, helps to build intergovernmental ties based on mutual trust. (Keohane & Nye, 1989)

## 12. *John Ikenberry*

Ikenberry is a prominent liberal scholar who studied the roots of American "hegemony." He also contributed significantly to the meaning-making of the related concept of "unipolarity." Ikenberry argues that the postwar United States created a rule-based international relations system characterized by a unipolar structure. The pole is not a center of hard power but a hub where other states cooperate and communicate. Thus, for Ikenberry, institutional power is central to American "hegemony." He denies the inevitability of the fall of "hegemony" and provides stages that subsequent "multipolar" worlds should undergo. They include diffusion of power, creation of new hubs, power balancing, and security competition. According to him, the costs of remaking the world order under a new "hegemon" outweigh its benefits. Thus, Ikenberry argues that even if

the United States would lose a certain amount of power, it should stay a “hub,” which proves the foundations for security in the international relations system. (Ikenberry, Mastanduno & Others, p.232)

## **2.2. A study into transformation of “hegemony” existence**

The concept of hegemony has transformed over time. The transformation of the concept of "hegemony" is inextricably bound to the growth of US influence worldwide. In some ways, the global interest in the concept rose as a counter-reaction to US actions—this aspect defined core intertextual references that come along with the term's usage. Richard Ned Lebow and Simon Reich recently issued a book criticizing the tradition of affirming American hegemony. They argued that American hegemony was short-lived after changing to a more dynamic relationship with other actors. They say that even though scholars write about "power," they couldn't develop an adequate definition and measurement process. Thus, "American hegemony" is based on a priori assumptions which can't be proved in positivist terms. (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p.37) Subsequently, the authors engage in the deconstruction of American "obvious" influence. They outline three features of a "hegemon": agenda setting, custodianship, and sponsorship. After an analysis, Reich and Lebow claim that the US can't perform these duties on a "hegemonic" level. As a result, authors highlight the notion of "self-interest," attributed to both liberals and realists. According to them, liberals bond self-interest with wealth, while realists - with security. This ontological bias can lead to the International Relations theory, which must include "hegemony." To omit the bias, one should ask himself how and why the interests of the states are formed and how they are being implemented.

## **2.3. Origin and the transformation of “hegemony” in marxist discourse**

The claim's origin is found in Antonio Gramsci's works. "Prison notes" gained popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. (Rorty, 1992) The Marxist optimism marked the interwar period. The class theory gained widespread support and became treated as part of political discussion. The partial success of the Bolshevik revolution proved that the ideas of Karl

Marx were, to some degree, right. The absence of a worldwide revolution pushed Marxist scholars to challenge the orthodox theory while staying loyal to fundamental principles. This should be noted when describing Gramsci's approach to Class theory. For him, it was objective truth; the problem was with Marx's interpretation.

For the author, society's innate function is the creation of the "intellectuals" and "functioners" stratas. (Gramsci, 2011, p.140) These classes can be "deputies" by exercising the influence of the dominant group on the subaltern classes. This process leads to "hegemony," which includes spontaneous consent by the masses and apparatus of coercive power. Intellectuals control the "civil society" and the functionaries "the State". (Gramsci, 2011, p.143) Gramsci included empirical knowledge to support his assumptions. He claims that urban Northern Italy led the way to "technical intellectuals". At the same time, the rural South made "functionaries and professional men." For Gramsci, hegemony existed in the first place as it was connected with his empirical experience. (Gramsci, 2011, p.145) Thus, the idea of "hegemony" was made to describe a "real" rather than a "theoretical" phenomenon in the first place.

The concept continued its way of describing reality. The Marxist scholars tried to either instrumentalize it or counter it. For Raymond Williams, studying culture was a way to highlight constructions that enabled the bourgeoisie to influence the world order. Dutschke and the new left tried to use the concept to transform reality. The disappointment of the 1970s would continue a rise of left youth in 1968. (Kalinin, 2008, p.4) The Marxist school crisis led to a reassessment done by Laclau and Mouffe. They challenged orthodox Marxism and came out with new ontological principles. The idea that superstructure can influence base changed the understanding of "hegemony." Their findings came together with "linguistic turn" and post-structuralist science. The idea corresponded to the discovery of Foucault, Butler, Derrida, and Bourdieu. Nevertheless, it unfolds in turn even in the Marxist realm. Later we would examine Marxists who denied Laclau and Mouffe's conclusions.

## 2.4. The concept of “hegemony” in International Relations during Cold War

In International Relations, realists and liberals were the ones who ultimately agreed on the existence of American hegemony after World War II. (Reich & Lebow, 2014, p.17) It was based on a belief shared by Morgenthau that "hegemony" is an attribute of the state rather than social class. (Morgenthau, 1967) In 1964, Kenneth Waltz described the benefits of a "bipolar world," which, in his view, was the opposite of "hegemony." (Waltz, 1964) This corresponds with the British school's assumption of dual hegemony. Martin Wight, who represented schools' views on hegemony, interpreted "hegemony" as an eventual historical stage. This was an objective necessity for him, and thus he analyzed history accordingly. Wight started attributing "hegemony" to multiple actors: Atheno-Spartan, European Ensemble, etc. (Watson, 2007, p.28). Thus, the bipolar world was included in the "hegemonic" framework. The Cold War period is notable for its pragmatic approach to International Relations. In research on American international relations, scholars Maliniak and Oakes identified trends dominating the community. They noticed constant domination of a non-paradigmatic approach and ambivalent approach to policy-making. (Maliniak, 2011) They argue that most of the interviewed scholars make their study to influence actual policies. Still, only 9% of the reviewed works consist of policy recommendations that can be implemented. However, 51% of interviewed scholars claimed they had provided recommendations to state representatives. This is followed by the claim that from 1945 to 1989, more than 80% of the works were focused on recent history, which consisted of this exact timeframe, and a primary topic was the Soviet Union. (Maliniak, 2011) These results may seem obvious, yet they can give a better glimpse into scholarly activity. The postwar USA has left isolationist policies in favor of active foreign policy. Simultaneously it entered the world formed by brand new relations between actors. The scholar community understood their work is finding a way to deal with the current situation. S. Hoffman characterized the realist school as an "Intellectual compass which would justify permanent involvement in world affairs." (Hoffman, 1977) The necessity to make practical contributions pushed to making sense of empirical understanding of contemporary world politics. Thus, academic international relations were born in a time period that Reich and Lebow describe as "short US hegemony."

(Reich & Lebow, 2014, p.17) The ontological models built to implement in foreign policy making were eventually used to build universal theory. This partially explains the theoretical problem that shocked American international relations scholars and Sovietologists. Empirical models were made to produce short-term results. Thus they couldn't be used to analyze events out of their scope. The "hegemony" itself was a concept created based on empirical knowledge. It felt that the US had become an overlord, so it naturally transformed into an assumption.

## **2.5. Post-cold war transformation of “hegemony” and its connection to anti-globalism**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, "hegemony" became an essential concept in neorealist schools. Mearsheimer became a fierce critic of US foreign policy based on the assumption that the US became a "hegemonic" state. (Mearsheimer, 2001) Mearsheimer introduced a cohesive framework of international relations that describes them as a structure that defines each actor's actions. He insisted that rational states naturally strived for power and introduced a novel idea. (Mearsheimer, 2001) According to him, the "tragedy" was the fact that the state's position in a structure might force him to start a war. If one reaches the limits of power allowed by his position in a structure - one needs to engage in war with regional or world "hegemon" to gain more power. (Mearsheimer, 2001) Mearsheimer also enhanced an idea of the "liberal world order" and provided foundations for its inevitable fall. He criticized international organizations as ruled by "great powers" and ineffective in achieving their goals. (Mearsheimer & Alterman, 2001)

Significant criticism came from Noam Chomsky, who became the most prominent anti-establishment thinker in the USA. Chomsky started a wave of new left critiques of neoliberalism, which expanded into an interdisciplinary trend among social sciences. (Bhagwati, 2004) Subsequently, his basic assumptions became common knowledge for various anti-establishment and anti-globalist actors. (Revel, 2004) The anti-globalization movement was primarily important in the 1990s. Apart from Chomsky, notable political scientists wrote about it. Most important were Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, and David Harvey. David Harvey published a work demonstrating the creation and

introduction of "neoliberal hegemony." For him, the United States to secure its "hegemonic" position created a meta-theory. Neoliberalism was introduced in subaltern countries through inter-state agreements, international organizations, and academia. (Harvey, 2007) Immanuel Wallerstein provided a Marxist idea of international relations structure - the World System. According to him, the world functioned through relations between the center, semi-periphery, and periphery, and the capitalist logic limited the ability to escape this system. (Wallerstein, 2020) Samir Amin described how the United States eliminated the possibility of economic growth of the "Global South" through the use of the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. (Amin, 2014) This dualism became common knowledge for various anti-establishment circles. Nevertheless, the anti-globalization movement started as an anti-capitalist project and was supported by left-wing youth; the radical right instantly shared it. Pat Buchanan, an American politician mostly connected to paleoconservatism, used the ideas presented by Harvey and Wallerstein to argue for tariffs in trade with Japan. (Bhagwati, 2004) Such an alliance would undergo a transformation during the 2000s. The American invasion of Iraq and Global financial crises would transform the movement into the current populist wave. (Chiozza, 2009) The idea of "American hegemony" would be attacked by European populists.

This modern meaning-making which stands, includes the following assumptions.

1. The natural state of international relations is anarchy.
2. International relations exist as a structure - represented by a "liberal/neoliberal order."
3. The system has an immanent inner logic that requires actors to act in a certain way.
4. Resources are limited and disproportionately distributed.
5. The structure includes a "hegemon," which is a beneficiary of resource distribution.

Thus, an assumption-based realist-Marxist consensus on the existence of "hegemony" was formed and provided a theoretical perspective for various anti-systemic actors. "US hegemony" became common knowledge and was shared among social sciences. (Harvey, 2007, p.16)

## 2.6. “Hegemony” and Anti-americanism

Giacoma Chiozza, in his study of anti-Americanism, highlights a single most important aspect of the movement worldwide. (Chiozza, 2009) It is its inherent ambiguity. He notes that in most regions, the position is represented in quiet disdain for American influence rather than radical actions taken to counter it. The one important exception is the Middle East, where respondents more frequently tend to disdain every aspect of the United States. (Chiozza, 2009) In other regions, particularly Europe, the disdain is bonded with the view on the “American role.” People tend to criticize the American position in the structure of international relations rather than the American people, culture, or way of life. Thus, a wave of anti-globalization sentiments in the 1990s and 2000s created a logical chain: international relations is a structure - relations in the structure characterized as a zero-sum game - in a current structure, we have a “hegemon” represented by the United States of America - it holds its “hegemonic” position by influencing a structure to be unequal and beneficiary to the USA. This assumption-based scheme ignores topics that both Marxists and realists challenge. Whether this position is gained through soft or hard power is not important. The general consensus is that both are used to some degree. A harsh criticism of the “neoliberal/liberal” order was centered on liberal scholars who became associated with champions of American hegemony. Keohane, Nye, and Ikenberry agreed on the existence of “hegemony,” yet they argued in favor of it based on rational arguments. An idea that the benefits of liberal world order outperform costs was central in Ikenberry’s argumentation in favor of its perseverance. The close situation happened to a branch of Marxists who endorsed the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe. Once power is represented as tangible relation, it becomes illogical about hegemony as a characteristic of a state. Poststructuralists switch the critique of capitalism from focusing on the United States to the worldwide affluent class.

To conclude, we have examined the transformation of the concept of "hegemony" in international relations and broader political science since the end of World War II. We have put emphasis on the conditions which influenced scholars in their research throughout history to find how the academic community proved the existence of "hegemony" and intertextually linked it with the United States. The cold war period was

marked by the works of Western scholars who aimed to create a cohesive theory of international relations that would fundamentally describe the current world order. The remarkable role of the United States based on the Bretton Woods system provided foundations for the popularization of different theories of "hegemony." These theories were focused on the nation-state as the primary actor of world politics and based on the assumption of the anarchic nature of international relations. The subsequent period was noted by the rise of a structuralist understanding of international relations, which described actors' decisions as rational reactions to the changes in structure. After the end of the Cold War, the scholar community assumed that the world was put under a complete "hegemony" of the United States. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the shift in Marxism led them to speak from a safer position as they weren't suspicioned of treason in the United States. This shift made a wave of American and, more broadly, western Marxist thinkers who focused on criticizing American "hegemony" and its implications in the form of globalization. The anti-globalization movement's main assumptions corresponded with realist scholars' critique of "hegemony." The Bush administration made a series of crises that undermined American moral superiority and gave way to the popularity of anti-globalization assumptions. A theoretical framework that disdained the American role in the system of international relations became a fundament for decision-makers from both the right and left political spectrum.



## CHAPTER III: THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE TERM “HEGEMONY” IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

### 3.1. Outlining examples and dividing into meaning-making categories

We would present a highlighted quote and divide its meaning into three categories: action, representation, and identification. We would follow the chronological order of the statements to note the transformation of the concept.

“These objective processes are being opposed by the Western globalist elites, who provoke chaos...they are doing all they can to keep hold onto the hegemony and power that are slipping from their hands...Their hegemony means stagnation for the rest of the world and for the entire civilisation; it means obscurantism, cancellation of culture, and neoliberal totalitarianism.” (Putin, 2022)

*Action:* Putin highlights his enlightened position by addressing the audience in the form of a warning. He establishes himself as a man possessing knowledge and an audience as one in a precarious position. One which needs help.

*Representation:* Here Putin speaks of history as the scientific process. The West tries to go against “objective” processes, yet its “hegemony” “slips from their hands”. He stresses that his audience is directly influenced by “Western hegemony”. Then he describes features of this influence: obscurantism, cancellation of culture, and neoliberal totalitarianism.

*Identification:* Using the form of a warning, the author associates himself with the audience, which is threatened. Putin becomes a champion of objective processes and, consequently, civilization.

“The national flag symbolises...the achievements and victories of our ancestors that inspire us to care for and defend our Motherland and never permit any foreign hegemony or diktat.” (Putin, 2022)

*Action:* Putin makes a derivative proclamation. He simultaneously pledges to act a certain way and describes reasons to do so.

*Representation:* The “hegemony” here is synonymous with “diktat”. It represents a state that Russia hasn’t experienced and provides reasons for that. For Putin, the ‘great

achievements of ancestors” were reasons that Russia never was under “foreign diktat” and a motivation to continue being so. This places “hegemony” in direct opposition to Russia.

*Identification:* Here Putin places himself on a list next to “great ancestors” and takes responsibility for a fight against “hegemony or diktat”.

We are seeing the difficult process of the forming of a more just world order. The old unipolar hegemony is inexorably collapsing. This is an objective reality that the West is categorically refusing to accept. Clinging to the past and trying to pursue a policy of dictate in all areas – from international relations and the economy to culture and sports – the notorious collective West is creating more and more problems and crises. (Putin, 2022)

Today, in the context of a global crisis, when the hegemony of the collective West is fading into the past and a new and fairer multipolar world is taking shape, (Putin, 2022)  
“Some members of the international community are doing everything in their power to preserve their faltering hegemony and to this end, they are using various political, military, economic, information and other methods and means” (Putin, 2022)

*Action:* Putin acts as a storyteller, positioning himself as an individual with access to the ultimate truth.

*Representation:* Here “hegemony” is represented as a state of the world. It collapses due to the movement of objective historical forces. The quote aims to portray the vein of “Western” attempts to save “hegemony”.

*Identification:* Here the speaker identifies himself with objective historical forces. The main idea of a passage is to prove one’s position on the right side of history.

“Over the long centuries of colonialism, diktat and hegemony, they got used to being allowed everything, got used to spitting on the whole world. It turned out that they treat people living in their own countries with the same disdain, like a master.”

*Action:* Here Putins describes an assumption he makes about the roots of “Western” actions. He instrumentalizes history and traumatic experiences by highlighting colonial heritage.

*Representation:* The author makes a synonymous list by noting “colonialism, diktat and hegemony”. He implies the duration of “hegemony” as something which was described as “the West” for “long centuries”.

*Identification:* Putin speaks on behalf of the humiliated, identifying himself with the victims of “colonialism, diktat and hegemony”. He distances himself from the oppressor and allies with the oppressed.

“All states that possess or aspire to genuine strategic sovereignty and are capable of challenging Western hegemony, are automatically declared enemies. (Putin, 2022)”

*Action:* Speaker utilizes his position to make statements based on an assumed higher level of access to information.

*Representation:* The author starts to attribute features to “hegemony”. Each feature can be assessed as “evil”, as it makes an intertextual link towards the general realm of human reactions. Also, the author puts “hegemony” in the contemporary tense to prove its relevance.

*Identification:* Putin clearly divides the world into those who possess “hegemonic” power and those who are affected by it. He creates a discursive unity among those who oppose “Western hegemony”.

“Unlike some countries claiming hegemony and bringing discord to the global harmony, Russia and China are literally and figuratively building bridges. (Putin, 2022)”

*Action:* The author engages in the formation of the discursive coalition. He utilized the statement to ensure a complimentary tone to China.

*Representation:* The “hegemony” here becomes a “claimed” feature, thus the author implies consciousness of the action. “Creating Hegemony” stops being a result of “objective history processes” and comes up as an act done by “the West”. Putin also uses opposition to highlight qualities adjusted to the “hegemonic system”. “Hegemony” is attributed to creating discord, which is opposed to a “multipolar world” which creates unity and harmony.

*Identification:* Putin utilizes his opposition to “hegemony” to unite China and Russia in a discursive camp. According to this framework, China is an oppressed nation that also suffers from “Western hegemony”. This puts China and Russia into an “us against them”

situation. Also, the opposition to “hegemony” implies the egalitarian nature of the Sino-Russian alliance, as neither participant should become a hegemon.

Western elites not only deny national sovereignty and international law. Their hegemony has pronounced features of totalitarianism, despotism and apartheid. They brazenly divide the world into their vassals – the so-called civilized countries – and all the rest, who, according to the designs of today's Western racists, should be added to the list of barbarians and savages

*Action:* Putin continues to present information from a position of knowledge. Social relations stay stable with an interconnection of truth and power.

*Representation:* The words of inquiry are “hegemony,” “divide,” and “racists,” as well as “totalitarianism, despotism, and apartheid.” The “hegemony” is a concept that links any “bad” activity which is going on in the world to “the West.” Once the “hegemony” is established, it is the hegemon who bears responsibility. Any crimes perpetrated can be presented as a counteraction towards the hegemon and thus move responsibility towards it.

*Identification:* Here, we can see a complete judgemental statement amplified by emotional attachment towards the victim's side. Putin uses *narrative reports of speech* to put words into “Western” mouths. Thus, he creates a “Western” grammar that is *a priori* xenophobic.

### **3.2. Contextualizing a social event which constitute the text**

Presented textual pieces are part of an ongoing major event which can be summarized as the “Russian war on Ukraine”. This major social event is divided into a variety of smaller ones. The highlighted pieces are part of the rhetorical politics of belligerents. One can note several most obvious chains of events that contain these texts. We can list an ongoing debate over the state of the “world order” and Russia’s state within it. It particularly highlights the importance of the concept of “hegemony” as the concept is a semiotic tool used frequently in this debate. These particular texts are all united in Putin’s strategy of justifying the policies of Russia in a given period. In a general debate about the “world order”, Russia has a strict position, outlined goals, and rhetoric instruments to get it.

(Drozdova & Robinson, 2019) This chain of events can be tracked since the so-called “Munich speech” when he for the first time explicitly highlighted Russian aspirations. (Drozdova & Robinson, 2019) The concept of “hegemony” belongs to its own sub-debate over the existence, representation, and countering “hegemonic” powers. This social event originated in the scholar community and made its way through a dialectical discourse of radical political theorists, mainstream international relations schools, and popular politics. (Dirzauskaite, 2017)

### **3.3. Outlining genre immanent to highlighted pieces of text**

All of the textual pieces are situated within one genre chain - presidential speeches. This chain can be characterized by a relatively low genre mixture. All of the speeches are centered around a particular topic of the ongoing invasion. This eventually mixes such different topics as “National flag day” and “Meeting with special services”. This unification results in shared characterizations for various textual pieces. The main features of presidential speeches are their official tone and formal approach. They limit the scope of the author’s semiotic constructions usage. In this genre, one supposedly shouldn’t use obscene lexical and direct accusations. The alienation of Putin’s regime led to the lifting of particular limitations. For example, direct accusations can be spotted - “blatant colonialist”, and “Western racists”. The “hegemony” in this genre can be used both as an accusation and as a statement of fact. The social relations of the genre are particularly patronymic. The speaker is a priori seen as possessing and projecting power. His view is also associated with the official position of the state. Following these social relations, we can state that the expressed meaning term “hegemony” is expressed as “official” and endowed with the semantic power immanent to the Russian state.

### **3.4. A study into accentuating the difference by the author**

We can examine the author's approach towards difference with respect to the selected term “hegemony”. Throughout each piece, we can see a pattern. Putin uses the term to accentuate the difference. It is presented as a watershed between “us” and “them”. Of particular interest is the creation of an abstract union with the Chinese state by making

an opposition “hegemony-friendship” (Ex. 8). The difference is used as justification. This comes in the form of self-affirmation. “They exist and are bad, thus we exist and we are good”. This semiotic act of accentuating the difference of oneself in relation to hegemony is further enhanced by one’s assessment as peers. As we inquired in the previous termwork - Putin makes an unequivocal division of actors into those who are subjects of international relations and those who are not. As we concluded, the semiological positioning of Russia as an equal foe to “the West” is a cornerstone of rhetoric politics. This is enhanced by rhetoric comparison to those who claim “hegemony”. According to Specter, this is a strive for “greatness” as this is post-positivist unscientific criteria that can only be achieved by intersubjective rhetoric exercises. (Specter, 2023) One should oppose oneself to those who he finds “great”, so one will be “great” as foe. Nevertheless, such opposition only makes sense, while it is unspoken. If one speaks aloud about the existence of such rhetoric exercises they become meaningless, which leads us to positivist explanations.

### **3.5. An inquiry on semantic relations, speech functions, and grammatical mood**

The semantic relations between sentences are characterized by two main categories: consequential and contrastive. The genre of speech determines its content. Consequential relations are most adequate for conducting a contingent narrative. The author basically tells the audience a story about how international relations function (Ex 1, 3-5). Another relation is contrastive (Ex 8) - Putin creates a semantic unity between Russia and China as opposed to the “hegemonic” West.

The genre also presupposes types of exchange and speech functions that the author would use. Putin engages in one-sided knowledge exchange, as the person who obtains more information is seen as a person of power. The most frequent speech function is a statement, which goes along with a consequential exchange of knowledge.

Putin mostly engages in “metaphorical” statements. Statement of fact becomes a prevalent type that takes place from hypotheticals and predictions. Once one references history as objective science, your predictions become facts and hypothetical scenarios become forecasts of the future. The evaluation statements are the dominant ways to

address “hegemony”. The term does not fit without a relation to the author. Once Putin addresses “hegemony” there is an assessment of this social event. The grammatical mood is declarative which corresponds to the hierarchical position of the speaker.

### **3.6. An inquiry into modality, evaluation, and style in the text**

The text is unified in one shared modality. It can be described as a high-commitment epistemic modality. The author only makes statements in which he is certain “hegemony is collapsing”, “hegemony means stagnation” etc. This modality logically intervenes with the author's commitment to an allegedly scientific view on international relations.

The value system of the work is highly inconsistent. It is centered on attack on others, rather than exaltation of own achievements. The accusations vary from mainstream Christian morality to anti-globalist ethics - “hegemony is bringing discord”, “hegemony are used to spitting on the whole world” and “hegemony means cancellation of culture and obscurantism”.

It is rather complicated to unite the texts under one distinct style. We should answer the question of relations between an author and the actors and social forces represented. The author talks about international relations, which is exactly his sphere of decision-making as president of the Russian Federation. This implies that the author provides a narrative that is centered around him as the protagonist. This empowers authors to present first-hand experiences with an advantage over those who haven't taken part in the events.

### **3.7. The effects of intertextuality on the meaning-making process**

One can track the lack of direct intertextual links to other sources. The one exception is the short naming of certain “Western experts” who agree with Putin on the question of “hegemony”. This example is of particular importance as it gives us a rare glance over which voices are “heard” by the Kremlin. The reference to “Western experts” can be attributed to various political scientists who criticize “American hegemony”. Nevertheless, there is one, whose theory is used via Russian official channels. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, 2022). John Mearsheimer was accused of making propaganda for the Russian Federation by Ann Applebaum. (Applebaum, 2022)

Yet, this relationship is much more complicated than patronage. Moreover, we can't claim that Putin's representation of hegemony was formed by Mearsheimer. (Rachman, 2023)

On the contrary, I would argue that Mearsheimer only capitalized on preexistent discourse which shaped public discussion of "hegemony". This intertextual relation sheds light on the perpetual rhetoric relations between Mearsheimer and Putin. Mearsheimer creates a theory that predicts the actions of Putin. (Ross Smith, 2023) This benefits Mearsheimer as it "proves" his qualification for scholarly work. The need to maintain the actions of Putin within an already existent theory leads to Mearsheimer enhancing the theory in relation to Putin. Putin pursues policies that need justification, thus he instrumentalizes the most convenient theory. The absence of a unified intellectual justification basis provides the ability to switch from one theory to another.

Nevertheless, apart from intertextual references one needs to look into how the meaning-making process became possible. The coherent fabric of text can make sense if it is built on publicly known assumptions. These assumptions are formed in discourse to which actors with different degrees of "power" contribute. This intertextuality is much more apparent in the text, as semiotic constructions such as "neoliberal hegemony", "genuine strategic sovereignty" or "objective processes of history" are themselves loaned from scholarly discourses. Only by dividing the fabric of text by its assumptions can we make sense of the expressed conclusions.

### **3.8. Describing a framework for the representation of the social events**

We can see a recurring pattern of treating history as an objective science. Such a way to analyze history is embedded in dialectic materialism. (Bukharin, 1928) The framework which organized the Soviet education and scientific system in times when Putin grew up. Once one perceives history as an objective science, he should attribute features to it. (Snyder, 2017) One creates a framework in which there are "stages of development" and an "end goal". (Snyder, 2018) This goes along with Marxist-Leninist understanding and makes it possible to treat history as a tool for policy-making. If one objectively knows the end goal, then everything in between loses its value, it stops being a thing-in-itself



and becomes a way to reach a final stage. (Snyder, 2018) Putin unequivocally states that “hegemony” is a certain historical stage in which time has passed. His duration analysis differs from statement to statement. He presumes that it has lasted at least “for long centuries”. Yet, one can be stated for sure - he claims that in the future there would be no “Western hegemony” and the world would become “multipolar”. (Ex. 1,2,4) The process of reasoning has a lot to do with responsibility. One can pass the burden of consequences onto objective historical processes, as was done in the Soviet Union. (Snyder, 2010) The idea to end “hegemony” and to reach a “multipolar” world can be Putin’s endgame. This mindset is cohesive and provides the author with a way to prove his beliefs. Multiple signs can be interpreted as proof that “Western hegemony collapses”. This in its way empowers the desire to reach the next historical stage. This desire leads to Putin taking direct actions to “help” historical processes. (Snyder, 2010) Still, an “objective” understanding of history fades when Putin talks about the “heroic past”. He sees his predecessors as martyrs and heroes, who willingly protected Russia, paying the highest price. (Ex 2) Such supplements can be treated as rhetoric meant to bolster patriotic feelings. Otherwise, they highlight the demarcation line between “subjects” and “objects”. Those who possess “power” can act against “historical processes,” while those who don’t form these processes. This way, Putin embraces the Russian position as an independent subject.

### **3.9. The discovery of basic assumptions and discourses which engendered them**

As one bases its understanding of the world on the assumption that the world can be fully counted and organized, one starts to see social events as essential, rather than formed. The idea that society can be objectively studied leads to attempts in description of the surrounding world based on empiric experiences. The basic assumption for Putin is that “hegemony” exists and is temporary - it can be seen in quotes like “hegemony is collapsing”, and “cling on to hegemony”. We do not get a coherent definition of what he means by “hegemony”, yet we can study the articulation. (Barthes, 2016) We can analyze the most used synonyms and hyponyms to unravel the meaning. The most frequently used word is “diktat”. (Ex 2,4) This implies influencing one’s decision using hard power.

(Reich & Lebow, 2014) This emphasis on hard power can also be seen in terms “of colonization, “totalitarianism”, “and despotism.” Putin sees “hegemony” as the transmission of hard, military power over other actors of international relations. Thereby, Putin might have a Marxist understanding of history, yet be closer to a realist understanding in respect to international relations. Nevertheless, Putin’s representation of “hegemony” can be explained in terms of realist theory. (Ross Smith, 2023) “Hegemony” based on consent, as it is promoted by Marxist thinkers, hasn't been implied. Moreover, it was mostly noted that “hegemony” was forced upon subaltern actors. (Ex 1-5) Also, Putin rejects the liberal understanding of “hegemony” as an International order based on shared rules, which are beneficial to the hegemon, yet are also enforced by him. He speaks about “forced rules”, addresses “information” and “legal” as means of subjugation, and evokes hyponyms such as “despotism” to ridicule that idea. (Ex 1,3-5) The realist framework also can be helpful in understanding Putin’s concept of a “multipolar world”. It is close to Mearsheimer’s understanding of “regional hegemony” or Waltz’s “balance of power”. (Mearsheimer, 2001)(Waltz, 1967) It can be described as a world in which “great powers” have “strategic sovereignty” with respect to other peers. (Specter, 2023) It neither includes a unified set of rules for everyone, nor higher authority to enforce them. It’s argued that each “great state” would act in a way not to provoke others and thus the “hegemony” would be prevented and harmony preserved. Still, this involves a segment of “sovereign actors” - those who have enough power to act on behalf of themselves. This view is close to traditional realist ontology for a reason. Specter makes a distinction between schools of International Relations. (Specter, 2023) He argues that realism is a logical continuation of the discussion on imperial geopolitics of the 19th century. After the Second World War international scholars became relevant to the Department of State, which led to a rise in activity. (Maliniak & Oakes, 2011) Eventually, mainstream scholars tried to create a cohesive theory using already-existent thoughts. Through this process, casual colonial geopolitics transitioned to the modern realist school of thought. (Specter, 2023) The basic assumption immanent to realist school continued to thrive and provided justifications for illiberal actions in the supposedly liberal world. These realist pre-modern assumptions were enhanced by modernist structuralism. Specter

summarizes the neorealist understanding of Putin's actions: "At worst, neorealists portray a deterministic world in which a figure like Putin had nearly no choice but to implement the dictates of the national interest geopolitically naturalized and understood". (Specter, 2023) Such a view is shared in Putin's speeches. This is shown via the articulation of "sovereign states" struggle for self-determination against "The West". "Hegemony" leads states to pursue decisions that would increase their security. The oppression of "The West" virtually justifies any opposition to it. As there is no higher authority which can delineate the fight against oppression with the oppression itself, there are no limits for actions which lead to "strategic sovereignty". (Ross Smith, 2023) To make a cohesive picture we need also to list the assumptions which were omitted or dismissed. Putin clearly dismisses basic assumptions imminent to the liberal paradigm. The international law sphere is depicted as inextricably linked to the interests of particular actors. The ability to live according to universal principles is denied by claiming that those principles are "culturally" tied to "The West". Thus the ideas of Ikenberry and Keohane are represented as disguises for hard power politics. What is also omitted are developments in Marxist thought which are present in the works of Laclau and Mouffe. The complicated look on power as dialectical relation is denied. Power becomes a one-sided force, which the oppressors radiate on the oppressed. Such simplification becomes a prerequisite for accepting a structural vision of International Relations.

The interesting switch in assumptions comes when Putin talks about the times of colonialism. This period of history is presented as an anomaly, it is accentuated as the period from which "The West" engendered. The idea that colonialism was a crime absolutely contradicts assumptions of nineteenth-century geopolitics and doesn't correspond to the anarchic structure of International Relations. The first relevant prominent text to accentuate colonialism as a crime is Lenin's "Imperialism, the final stage of Capitalism". (Lenin, 1913) The vague discursive idea of evil colonialism was present throughout Soviet times, so Putin presumably got to know it. We can see how basic neo Marxist assumptions are being articulated (Ex. 9). The division between "civilized" and "uncivilized" countries was highlighted and criticized by such anti-globalization scholars as Samir Amin and Noam Chomsky. (Amin, 2014) (Chomsky,

1998) The accentuation of “Western colonialism”, as a separate evil process, is based on an assumption that this type of colonialism was driven by capitalism. (Harvey, 2006). The “exploitation” and “diktat” are seen as separate from non-western colonization as they were perpetrated with the goal of capital acquisition. This leads to “hegemony” being used in a realist sense near the Marxist sense of “colonialism”. As we have shown, the “hegemony” for Putin is built on force, not consent.

This duality of assumptions leads us to a wider problem of meaning-making. If basic assumptions are not stable, then what is the fundament for claims? “Hegemony” becomes a rhetorical tool empowered by intertextuality.

### **3.10. Conclusion**

Our thesis is that Putin based his speech on the assumptions about “hegemony” provided by the scholar community. To challenge our assumption we compared our genealogical inquiry into how the term “hegemony” was transformed and our textual analysis of the speeches of Vladimir Putin.

The analysis of the text in relation to the social world can be summarized in the following points. The author engages in a series of ongoing debates on the future of International Relations. He positions himself in a position of power, utilizing his role as a decision-maker in international relations. This leads to high-commitment epistemic modality statements which are secured via intersubjective reference to empirical knowledge. We characterized these statements in their relation to the assumptions created by the scholar community.

It starts with the basic Enlightenment assumption further rearticulated by Marxists - methods and theories which are used to study the natural world can be used to study social ones. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944) This is continued with an assumption that “hegemony exists” which is based on a mainstream discussion in International Relations since 1945. (Reich & Lebow, 2014) In the course of these discussions, realists provided the next assumption which is “the hegemony is held by the United States”. (Mearsheimer, 2003) (Waltz, 1995) The Marxist provided further specification by attributing “hegemony” to the wider “West”. (Harvey, 2007) (Wallerstein, 2020). Simultaneously,

anti-globalist thinkers provided a basis to accentuate “Western hegemony” as particularly evil. (Chomsky, 1998) The “Western imperialism” was attributed to the logic of capitalism, which divided it from non-western imperialism. (Lenin, 1914) (Gramsci, 1928) (Amin, 2014) The “neoliberal hegemony” theory identified the legal and institutional nature of how “the West” created the “unipolar world”. (Harvey, 2007) The final idea was a neorealist structural understanding of “international relations”. (Mearsheimer, 2003) Neorealists pictured a world in which all of the actions are interconnected and mutually determine each other. Despite the active usage of Marxist assumptions Putin continues anti-globalist trend to omit uncomfortable developments. The post-structuralism turn in Marxism is omitted, so the power can be represented in a classic Marxist way as a one-sided force. This provided a possibility to justify decisions based on the deterministic vision of “rational” actions by statesmen, as those which were caused by structure. (Specter, 2023)

This assumption chain made it possible for Putin to provide a vision of the world which makes sense to certain audiences. He acts on behalf of a state which fights “Western hegemony” and thus is justified to use all the methods necessary to follow its national interest. Despite the critique, such a depiction can hardly be described as marginal. It’s supported by representatives of states, international organizations, public intellectuals, and scholars. This can provide insights into which assumptions should be challenged and discussed when working with oscillating actors.

## CONCLUSION

In our work we researched connections between the assumptions immanent to Vladimir Putin's articulation of the term "hegemony" and the assumptions behind hegemony engendered in political science scholar discourse. To achieve this goal we utilized two distinct qualitative methods which derive from a particular theoretical framework.

The ontological framework of Putin is represented by a belief that a social world can be understood the same way the natural world is. This Enlightenment assumption transitioned to a Marxist discourse where it would gain its central position. Putin's view on "hegemony" starts with a strong commitment to the fact that it exists. This view was engendered in the post-World war United States where scholars tasked with creating a universal theory of International Relations described the role of the United States based on empirical knowledge. The next step was an ambivalent assumption on "hegemony" being immanent in "the West" and specifically in the United States. Such a view originated in the Marxist interwar discourse by Antonio Gramsci. This intertextually tied "hegemony" with anti-americanism, this tendency was embraced in the works of David Harvey and Samir Amin. Putin ascribes "Western hegemony" to be particularly "evil". This view firstly engendered by Lenin transitioned through modern Marxist discourse into the 1990's anti-globalization movement. According to the inherent vice of "Western hegemony" is based on its "greed" - the sole function of "hegemony" is serving owners of capital. The next Putin assumption was the forceful nature of the International legal and institutional order. This was rooted in the realist description of anarchic order which denied the possibility of universal agreement. The works of Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer described liberal order as beneficial to "hegemon" in the first place. The final part of Putin's ontology was an idea that International Relations are inherently structural rather than agential. This assumption helped ridicule the individual responsibility of the actor and argued for an interdependent scheme where the actions of the "hegemon" predetermined the actions of the opposition.

We believe that this work can give insight to those who make decisions on constructing relations with actors who see sense in the speeches of Vladimir Putin.

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

### Дипломної роботи

*Тема:* Інструменталізація анти-американізму: Концепт “гегемонії” в Російській риторичній політиці.

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*Захищена* “ \_\_\_\_ ” \_\_\_\_\_ 2023 р.

#### *Короткий зміст роботи:*

У роботі досліджується артикуляція поняття “гегемонії” у Російській риторичній політиці порівняно до його використання у академічному середовищі. В першій частині роботи було проведено генеалогічне дослідження походження терміну “гегемонія”. У другій частині роботи був відтворений текстуальний аналіз використання терміна у промовах Владіміра Путіна. У підсумку були співставлені результати досліджень, аби виокремити основні припущення.

У результаті аналізу було описано як концепт “гегемонії” трансформувався від його введення у дискурс Антоніо Грамші. Були зображені обставини формування смислу для різних академічних шкіл. У результаті текстуального аналізу було виявлено, що базові припущення Владіміра Путіна є представлені класично марксистськими поняттями та ідеями структуралістського реалізму.

Підсумовуючи, були виокремлені припущення, які може розділяти аудиторія, що прихильно ставиться до промов Владіміра Путіна.

*Ключові слова:* Гегемонія, Російська Федерація, текстуальний аналіз, генеалогія, риторична політика, утворення смислів, публічні промови.

**Abstract:**

The article examines the articulation of the concept of "hegemony" in Russian rhetorical policy compared to its use in the academic discourse. In the first part of the work, a genealogical study of the origin of the term "hegemony" was conducted. In the second part of the work, a textual analysis of the use of the term in Vladimir Putin's speeches was reproduced. In conclusion, the research results were compared in order to highlight the main assumptions.

As a result of the analysis, it was described how the concept of "hegemony" was transformed after its introduction into the discourse of Antonio Gramsci. Circumstances of meaning formation for various academic schools were depicted. After the textual analysis it was found that the basic assumptions of Vladimir Putin are represented by classical Marxist concepts and ideas of structural realism.

In summary, some assumptions that may be shared by the audience that is sympathetic to Vladimir Putin's speeches were outlined.