

## Hobbes, Power Preponderance Theory and American Hegemony

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### *Abstract*

This article first presents theories that justify the concentration of power. In the field of political philosophy, Hobbes's theory argues in favor of the concentration of power in the hand of a monarch in order to prevent the state of nature. In the field of theories of international relations, power preponderance theory argues that power preponderance of one country prevents international wars. Consequently, both theories justify American hegemony, arguing that hegemony does not only serve the best interest of the USA, but also the interest of world peace. However, this article claims that checks and balances are important not just in domestic politics but in international relations as well.

**Key words:** Hobbes, power preponderance, American hegemony, Spinoza, balance of power, checks and balances.

The main purpose of this article is to show that American hegemony and theory, which justifies this hegemony (power preponderance theory), have their origins in Hobbes's political theory. The USA has, to an extent, become a "king of the world" in Hobbesian terms (although not a "legal king"). The second aim of the article is to overcome the differences between the main sub-disciplines of political science: political theory, domestic politics, comparative politics, and international relations. This article will attempt to make a comprehensive evaluation of whether concentration of power in domestic and international arena is desirable or not.

The first section of the article presents the most important elements of Hobbes's theory. The second section presents the power preponderance theory. The third sec-

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tion shows the magnitude of American hegemony over the world. The fourth section shows how power preponderance theory justifies American hegemony, with arguments similar to those Hobbes used to justify monarchy. This section also presents a criticism of the Hobbesian way of thinking, presented in power preponderance theory. The main conclusion is that power preponderance may bring about peace but such peace is primarily in the interest of a hegemon rather than in the interest of the entire world community.

## **1. Hobbes's theory: why is concentration of power desirable?**

### **1.1 Sources of power**

According to Hobbes (1992: 62), the goal of every person is to have as much power as possible because power enables future apparent good. "The POWER of a Man (to take it Universally), is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good. And is either Originall, or Instrumentall." Original (natural power) consists of strength, form, prudence, arts, eloquence, liberality, nobility. Instrumental power is based on the organic power and serves to further maximize the power. Instrumental power consists of wealth, reputation, popularity, success, affability, nobility, eloquence, physical appearance, knowledge and working craftsmanship. The power of the individual is always insignificant to the power of the society. Therefore, an association with other individuals creates political power. Hence, friendship creates power. Furthermore, possession of servants produces power. Political power is the most important because the power of a ruler is equal to the sum of power of all individual citizens.

### **1.2 The state of nature**

For Hobbes, the state of nature is one in which there is no state, *i.e.* a condition in which there is constant war of each against all. War in the state of nature is the consequence of unlimited use of natural justice by every person. The state of nature is characterized by persistent insecurity. The economy is based on robbery because no one has guarantee that one will possess what one produces. As everyone wants to augment their power, everyone is constantly forced to fight because, by crashing the power of others, one increases their own power. In that case there is no society and every person should take care of themselves.

In the state of nature war is omnipresent due to the absence of the state. There is no civil law that would impose the execution of natural law. There is also no right except a comprehensive natural right to do everything that a person considers necessary for the preservation of their own life. Therefore, words such as righteousness or sin may have

no meaning in the state of nature because there are no regulations that could decide what is just and what is not. Sin exists only in the social order in which good and evil are defined by law.

To sum up, Hobbes considers the state of nature a bad form of society and tries to find the order that can prevent the state of nature.

### **1.3 Hobbes's theory on the relationship between political power and type of government**

For Hobbes, monarchy is the best guarantee that people will not return to the state of nature. Arguments for this statement are the following. Each person tries to accumulate as much power as possible. "The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power" (Hobbes, 1992: 53). Power of one person is limited by the power of another. In order to increase their own power, a person should strive to conquer other people. In the state of nature, not only do people try to protect their own power but they also try to enhance it. Since no one wants to relinquish their own power voluntarily, conflict and war of each against all are inevitable. Mutual warfare decreases joint power and threatens the life of every man. Since the instinct for survival is the strongest instinct, the person tries to find a way to protect their own life, but this is impossible in the state of nature. Therefore, people try to create a state where their lives are protected and safe. The state increases the power of each individual because the individual is no longer threatened by other people. People's power is multiplied in associations. The community as a whole (and each individual as well) has more power when individual powers are united than when they are in conflict with one another. If two equal forces act in opposite directions, their combined forces will be equal to zero. However, if they act in the same direction, their combined force will be equal to the sum of these two forces. This is the reason why people try to unite their powers. For, the biggest power is the one that comes from organizing the people. Hence, reason motivates people to abandon the state of nature, and to organize the state. Thus, it is interest – not the love of others – that forces people to associate with other people.

There are three types of commonwealth in which people can associate themselves – monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. According to Hobbes, monarchy is the best solution. He quotes six reasons why monarchy is a better solution than aristocracy or democracy. For this analysis, the fourth reason is the most important: "a Monarch cannot disagree with himselfe, out of envy, or interest; but an Assembly may; and that to such a height, as may produce a Civill Warre" (Hobbes, 1992: 132). In other words,

the probability for the outbreak of a civil war (and for the return to the state of nature) is the lowest in monarchy. Since the state of nature is the worst thing that may happen to people, the type of commonwealth which reduces the probability for civil war to the lowest possible level is the best type of commonwealth. This type of commonwealth is monarchy – a strong undivided government.

A monarch's power is unlimited. Only he has the right to legislate, execute laws and make judgments. His power is equal to the sum of powers of his citizens since only the ruler has the power and the right. The monarch judges what is right and what is wrong. The greatest crime is to resist the monarch's will and to initiate rebellion because it can restore the state of nature. The obligation of obedience to the monarch lasts as long as he guarantees safety for his people. "The Obligation of Subjects to the Sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by Nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no Covenant be relinquished" (Hobbes, 1992: 153). By way of explanation, if the monarch can no longer guarantee safety, the individual is no longer obliged to obey. The individual deprives himself of all freedom he has in the natural state in order to ensure the highest value – security of his life. If the monarch is not able to ensure personal safety, the individual is not obliged to be obedient any more. Monarchy should be able to protect individuals from both foreign threat and the threats from inside the commonwealth.

It has already been explained why Hobbes prefers monarchy to aristocracy and democracy. However, Hobbes considers all of those three forms of state (democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy) as equal. Nevertheless, his preference of monarchy is the consequence of his theory of sovereignty, in accordance with which the power in any form of state is absolute. The separation of powers is unthinkable for Hobbes since, in his opinion, it calls into question the unity of the state and, therefore, the preservation of civil status. In this regard, when it comes to concentration of power/authority, the difference between the various forms of state is rather secondary to the difference between the state and non-state political formations. In other words, Hobbes is not only and primarily an advocate of the concentration of power/authority because he is a supporter of monarchy, but also because he (as well as Bodin<sup>1</sup>) is an advocate of state absolutism which, regardless of the specific form of the state, excludes the possibility of the separation of powers. Hobbes also excludes external legal constraints on authorities in the form of a constitution. Hence, the entire Hobbes's discussion about the relationship between power and the type of government can be summarized in one sentence: people should relinquish all their individual powers to the monarch in order to prevent the state of nature and, along with it, to secure their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bodin (1979).

## 1.4 Hobbes and international relations theories

Is it possible to apply Hobbes's theory to international relations? According to Hobbes, states relate to one another the same way as individuals relate to other individuals in the state of nature. However, in the state, peace is based on legal regulation. In contrast, the relationship (and peace) between states is based on the balance of power. Furthermore, according to Hobbes, a king comes to power on the basis of social contract (legally). In contrast, no country rules the world legally. In addition, anarchy inside a state is not identical to anarchy in international relations. According to Williams (2006: 271), "relative equality which characterizes individuals in the state of nature ... differentiates these relations from those of states". Therefore, he claims (*ibidem*: 253) that "Hobbes's specific reflections on international politics are rare, and nowhere does he develop systematically his views on the subject. As a consequence, it is necessary to try to reconstruct his vision of international relations from his broader understanding of the foundations of politics". In short, it seems that it is difficult to apply Hobbes's theory of state to international relations.

However, in spite of the many differences between the domestic and international realm, there are many similarities between them. First, the logic of power/force is also present inside a state. People respect legal order because they know that disrespect of this order would produce the state of nature but this respect is also based on the real balance of power. So, the king establishes legal order as a result of the people's will but also as a result of his military supremacy.

Similarly, during the course of history, military supremacy of certain states has produced a certain order in international relations. *Pax Romana*, *Pax Britannica* and *Pax Americana* are the obvious examples of this order. In modern times, international law, which is the consequence of this order, is established.<sup>2</sup> And, even though a classical world police does not exist, it is interesting that international law is frequently even more respected than domestic laws. For example, over the last 25 years, there have been more civil wars than international wars.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, borders are more respected (and this is a fundamental element of international law) than constitutional orders inside states. Concerning anarchy, Williams's (2006) arguments are not very persuasive. Indeed, states are not equal in international relations. However, individuals – in an imagined state of nature – are also not equal. Put simply, the difference in power between the USA and Luxembourg is similar to the difference in power between a strong, young, well-armed man and a sick, unarmed, old person. On the other hand, both the USA

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion about international systems, international regimes and international order see Krasner (ed.), 1995.

<sup>3</sup> According to Leggold and Weiss (1998: 4), "eighty-two armed conflicts broke out in the five years following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and 79 were civil wars".

and Luxembourg are, formally, equal members of the United Nations (in an anarchical world). In other words, the differences between domestic politics and international politics do exist but these differences are not of a magnitude that prevents the application of Hobbes's theory to the analysis of international relations.

Indeed, it is very difficult to find a textbook about international relations theories that does not include Hobbes's theory.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, authors of these textbooks think that Hobbes's theory is relevant for the analysis of international relations. But, what is even more important, the most prominent scholars of international relations do include Hobbes's theory as a part of their own analyses. According to Hoffman (1965: 27), "the 'Hobbesian situation' must be our starting point [for international relations theories – M. A.]." According to the founder of the realist theory, "the essence of international politics is identical with its domestic counterpart. Both international and domestic politics are struggle for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in the domestic and in the international spheres"<sup>5</sup> The most prominent experts in international relations theories, such as Kennan and Walzer,<sup>6</sup> have similar opinions about the influence of Hobbes on international relations theories. Even the most recent analyses of Hobbes's political theory also treat Hobbes not only as a theoretician of domestic politics but also as a theoretician of international relations.<sup>7</sup> Naticchia (2013: 242) calls this view "Hobbesian realism in international relations".

To summarize, Hobbes's theory is an important part of international relations theories. Accordingly, the next section explains the connections between Hobbes's theory and a modern theory of international relations – power preponderance theory.

## 2. Power preponderance theory

Hobbes's theory was a predecessor of modern theory of international relations, and that is power preponderance theory.<sup>8</sup> According to this theory, peace is best secured if a country has huge relative power preponderance (as a monarch should have, according to Hobbes, inside a state). The strongest country establishes the rules and these rules produce peace. To use Hobbes's terms, a hegemonic country becomes a sovereign and this sovereign guarantees peace (although this hegemony is not legal). In other words, hegemony produces peace. In contrast, the absence of a hegemon produces anarchy,

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Betts (2002) or Goldstein and Pevehouse (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Morgenthau (1948: 31).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kennan (1966, especially page 49) and Walzer (1992).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, James (2013), Lloyd (2013), McMahan (2013) and Green (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Clausewitz also contributed to the establishment of power preponderance theory, claiming that the "dominant nation can preserve the peace simply by its ability to keep inferior nations in order" (quoted in Blainey, 1973: 109).

and anarchy causes war (just like the absence of a sovereign inside a country produces civil war). The hegemon establishes hierarchy and order. The hegemon is usually a victor from a previous major war. Peace lasts so long as the hegemon is able to keep hierarchy, rules and order. Furthermore, peace lasts so long as the hegemon is powerful enough to punish those who do not obey the international order. In this case a weaker state does not dare to challenge a stronger state and the stronger state does not have the reason to use force because the weaker state obeys the demands of its stronger counterpart.

Originally, power preponderance theory tried to explain the behavior of great powers and the origin of major wars. According to Lemke and Kugler (1996: 8), “as long as the dominant country remains preponderant over the other countries in the international system, peace is maintained ... because the weak obey the strong with few exceptions”. In contrast, likelihood of war is the highest under the condition of power parity because in that case “both sides see prospect of victory” (Geller and Singer, 1998: 69). Accordingly, a shift toward equality of power increases the likelihood of war.

Power preponderance theory is frequently connected with hegemonic stability theory, which claims that a dominant country establishes the “rules of the game” in international relations.<sup>9</sup> Other countries follow these rules because they are not powerful enough to challenge the existing order. However, when one country establishes power parity with a hegemon, war is likely to happen because “victory and defeat reestablish an unambiguous hierarchy of prestige concurrent with the new distribution of power” (Lemke and Kugler, 1996: 9). It is more likely that a challenger will initiate war because the challenger is not satisfied with the existing order. However, the hegemon may also initiate a preventive war in order to secure its dominant position.

It is important to add, at the end of this section, that even authors who support power preponderance theory argue that balance of power is only one among many factors that cause wars. According to Vasquez (1996: 53), “rather than seeing power transition as either a sufficient or necessary condition, it is better to view it as a factor that may increase the probability of war in the presence of other factors”. Another important factor might be the nature of the political system inside a country. Proponents of democratic peace theory argue that democracies do not fight each other, regardless of the balance of power between them.<sup>10</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to present the entire discussion about the validity of democratic peace theory. However, it is important to note that even the followers of this theory admit that democracies do wage wars with undemocratic countries. And there is no doubt that balance of power is one of, or even the most important factor that influences probability for war between de-

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Organski, 1968; Keohane, 1984; and Gilpin, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion about democratic peace theory see Brown et al. (1996).

mocracies and countries that do not have democratic and liberal political institutions. Therefore, even the democratic peace theory does not deny the importance of presence or absence of a hegemon in international relations.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. American hegemony**

Power preponderance theory justifies American hegemony over the world. For, if power preponderance causes peace, it is not just the interest of the USA but also the interest of the entire world to have American military preponderance and, consequently, American hegemony over the world. This is the reason why power preponderance theory is so popular in American political science. But, do we really live in the age of American military preponderance and American hegemony?

Military preponderance of the USA is really apparent and impressive. This can be seen in the fact that the USA spends slightly less on military than all other countries in the world combined.<sup>12</sup> The USA Navy is more powerful than all the navies of the world combined. Indeed, only the USA has a truly blue-water navy. Furthermore, the USA has naval bases around the world. As a result, the USA controls all the oceans of the world.

It is not just the navy that is superior. The USA air forces are probably stronger than all other world air forces combined. Very few countries can compete against US warplanes above 5,000 meters. American precision-guided weaponry can hit any target on earth. The USA has 100 military satellites. They surveil any movement on the ground. Since American satellites show movements on the ground, American enemies cannot move their weaponry without the risk of being destroyed. Moreover, the USA has the capability to destroy the satellites of other countries.

The USA has military bases in 36 countries, which means that American troops are present around the world. These military bases control the access to the most important regions of the world, including the regions with highest percentages of oil production and reserves of oil (the Persian Gulf). Furthermore, as a result of NATO expansion, American troops are now on Russian borders. Saint Petersburg can be hit by artillery. In short, the USA is prepared for war in any part of the globe.

American power preponderance is apparent not just in sheer numbers of weaponry. The USA military spends more on research and development than all other countries in the world combined. Furthermore, after WWII, almost all of the most important technological inventions were discovered in the USA (nuclear energy, computers, the

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<sup>11</sup> According to democratic peace theory, balance of power becomes irrelevant only when all the countries of the world become liberal democracies.

<sup>12</sup> This subsection is based on Wohlforth (2008).

Internet, robots), and 75 per cent of Nobel Prize winners live and work in the USA. Culturally, the USA dominates the world. The English language is *lingua franca* and American movies shape the world's *weltanschauung* (perception of the world). American music is listened to around the globe. In addition, American economic and political system and American liberal and democratic political theories have become attractive for many countries in the world, and this ideological influence contributes to American hegemony. And lastly, American universities are the most prestigious in the world. In short, the USA is the most powerful country in history.<sup>13</sup>

Is American hegemony beneficial for the entire world? According to Wohlforth (2008), the answer is positive because a unipolar world is both peaceful and stable. Consequently, the USA should protect its hegemony because this is good both for the USA and the world. American hegemony prevents an arms race and a great global war. No country can miscalculate the balance of power and challenge the USA. In short, the USA is a "benevolent" hegemon that does not use its power just for self-gains. Therefore, according to Owen (2008), only illiberal states fear the power of the USA. In brief, many American authors claim that American hegemony is good not just for the USA but for the entire world. To return to the beginning of this article, a Hobbesian world, in which the USA has become – *mutatis mutandis* – a "world monarch", is in the interest of the world because the overwhelming power of the USA establishes international rules of the game and secures peace (just like the monarch inside a country prevents civil war).

## 4. Criticism of Hobbes, power preponderance theory and American hegemony

It is primarily important to note that the three above-mentioned terms are strongly connected. Power preponderance theory is a transposition of Hobbesian theory to the international realm (excluding legality of the order). Furthermore, power preponderance theory is a justification of American hegemony. Therefore, this section will start with a criticism of Hobbes's theory or, more precisely, it will present Spinoza's theory on the solution for the state of nature.

### 4.1 Spinoza versus Hobbes

Hobbes and Spinoza were, to an extent, the predecessors of modern discourse about preconditions for peace, for the arguments they used are also used very similarly in

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<sup>13</sup> For a long period of time American hegemony was also based on American economic power. However, since 2014, China has become the largest economy in the world (based on purchase power parity). Therefore, American hegemony today is mainly based on its military might and, to a lesser extent, on its cultural dominance, as explained above.

modern discussions about the advantages of unipolar and multipolar worlds, and in discussions between proponents and critics of power preponderance theory.

Hobbes's and Spinoza's initial premises are very similar. Both establish their theories of the state on the analysis of the state of nature. Both conclude that it is necessary to establish the state in order to escape from the state of nature. Both come to very similar conclusions about human nature, the state of nature, and about the necessity of the state. Both argue that the state cannot be based on bare power. Their theories of the state, however, differ significantly. Hobbes argues in favor of legal order but also in favor of the concentration of power in the hands of a monarch, and Spinoza argues in favor of the diffusion of power in the state.

Spinoza (1677) claims that, in the state of nature, everyone has as many rights as they have power. He does not address in detail the sources of power of the individual (like Hobbes). However, it is evident from the *Treatise* that he finds that the foundation of power is based on military power, military force at the disposal of the individual, group or state. Therefore, Spinoza analyzes how to organize a military force in order to preserve the good order of the state. Hence, this section will focus on the following question: what is the relationship of powers in the state of nature and what should be the balance of power in Spinoza's ideal state?

Spinoza's first premise (1677: 2) is that the debate about the form of government should be based on real human nature rather than on the discussion of what men should be. "[Philosophers] conceive of men, not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be ... they have never conceived a theory of politics, which could be turned to use, but such as might be taken for a chimera, or might have been formed in Utopia." And real human nature is based on the desire for power because everybody has as much right as they have power. Obviously, Spinoza and Hobbes have very similar opinions about the human nature. Furthermore, there are not so many differences between them in the analysis of the state of nature. In addition, they both agree that only the state can eliminate the state of nature. However, the difference between the two authors is in the analysis of, using modern terms, the value of power balance inside the state. According to Spinoza, power is important not just in the state of nature but also inside the state.

The reasons are the following:

1. Even inside the state, everybody has as much right as they have power. One who relinquishes one's power also relinquishes one's rights.
2. If a ruler has absolute power, he may jeopardize the rights of citizens, including their basic rights such as the right to life and security.
3. There is no guarantee that the sovereign will not behave in the same manner toward the citizen as they behave among themselves in the state of nature. Even

if absolute power of the sovereign means peace, it may produce slavery. "If slavery, barbarism, and desolation are to be called peace, men can have no worse misfortune" (Spinoza, 1677: 18).

Therefore, Spinoza concludes: "From all which it follows, that the more absolutely the commonwealth's right is transferred to the king, the less independent he is, and the more unhappy the condition of his subjects" (Spinoza, 1677: 19). Since might produces right, the monarch's power should be limited. Since military power is the most important power, it should not be concentrated just in the hands of the sovereign but it should rather be dispersed. What does that mean? It means that all citizens should be armed. "The militia must be formed out of citizens alone, none being exempt, and of no others. And, therefore, all are to be bound to have arms ... The militia ought to be composed of the citizens only, and none of them to be exempted. For an armed man is more independent than an unarmed" (Spinoza, 1677; 19, 28). Only armed citizens can protect themselves from power abuse by a monarch. If people are armed they may remove a monarch from power if he becomes a tyrant. Furthermore, if people are armed, the monarch will have to obey the laws and he will have to respect the citizens' rights. In a word, Spinoza attempts to find a political system that could prevent the return to the state of nature but also one that could prevent tyranny.

What then are the main differences between Hobbes and Spinoza? The main aim of Hobbes's book is to find a political system that could prevent civil war, which he experienced during his life. He experienced all the sufferings brought by the state of anarchy or, to use his own terms, by the state of nature. Therefore, he wanted to find a system that gives the strongest guarantees against the return to the state of nature. And he found that system. Legal order and full concentration of power in the hands of a sovereign are, most likely, the best way to prevent anarchy. However, such a system does not prevent power abuse by the sovereign. Spinoza noticed that problem and tried to propose a system that may prevent both: the state of nature but also the monarch's power abuse. For Spinoza, the dispersion of power is essential, especially the dispersion of military power. Therefore, for Spinoza, it is essential that citizens be armed and military power based on the citizens' militia rather than on mercenaries. To use modern terms, balance of power is the best guarantee against power abuse. However, balance of power produces the risk of anarchy and the return to the state of nature. Nevertheless, this risk is worth taking because otherwise there is very high risk that monarchy could become tyranny, which is not less dangerous than the state of nature. Or, in Locke's words (1823: 145): "This is to think that men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes, but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions."

## 4.2 Criticism of power preponderance theory

In contrast to power preponderance theory, balance of power theory<sup>14</sup> argues that balance of power produces peace. Equality of power<sup>15</sup> destroys the possibility of easy victory and, therefore, no country will risk initiating conflict. War is prevented when the cost of aggression is high and benefits of going to war low. If a defender has a strong military, the cost of aggression becomes too high and benefits become too low. Therefore, balance of power secures peace the most since no country has favorable odds that aggression will produce more benefits than costs.

Hence, a power advantage motivates a more powerful country to attack. In other words, power preponderance motivates territorial expansion because only the military power of one's own country prevents the use of military power of another country. According to Mearsheimer (2001: 19), "power inequalities invite war, because they increase an aggressor's prospectus for victory on the battlefield". Consequently, all countries in the world would be insecure under hegemony because the hegemon might use his military power to achieve his own goals. In hegemony, the biggest threat for peace is the aggression committed by the hegemon.

## 4.3 Criticism of American hegemony

It is important to note that political scientists frequently have different criteria when they write about comparative politics and when they write about international relations. In comparative politics, balance of power (or checks and balances) is considered a prerequisite for democracy. For example, according to Madison (1996: 42), "the accumulation of all powers ... must justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny".

However, in international politics, power preponderance and American hegemony are considered desirable not just for the USA but also for the world (see above). Therefore, Ish-Shalom (2007: 551) concludes:

The internal contradiction is evident ... If one wishes to build domestic checks and balances to prevent concentrated power, one should aspire to a similar precautionary mechanism globally, ensuring that no single power can rule without prudence-reducing restraints. After all, prudence of Lord Acton's warning that "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupt absolutely" applies globally as well domestically.

<sup>14</sup> The most influential representatives of this theory are Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz and Quincy Wright.

<sup>15</sup> Here power is a synonym for military power because, according to Wright (1964: 121), "although 'political power' in a broad sense includes legal, cultural, and psychological factors, from the point of view of the balance of power it has usually been confined to actual and potential military power".

Indeed, American neoconservatives firmly advocate against gun control inside the USA. One of the arguments in favor of gun rights is that citizens' possession of arms enables security against tyranny.<sup>16</sup> So, if inside the USA – with all the democratic institutions that enable checks and balances – the possession of arms is important for the protection against tyranny of the American government, what can be the protection against tyranny of American government worldwide but military might of other countries?

According to Ikenberry (2008), other countries should not be afraid of American hegemony because of the following reasons. First, the USA is a democracy and, therefore, American democratic institutions prevent American power abuse worldwide. Second, the USA is a member of the UN and the NATO, and American foreign policy is constrained by these institutions. Furthermore, other countries have benefits from US hegemony because this hegemony enables free trade and peace.

However, during the last fifteen years, the USA has not respected international institutions, especially not the UN. Moreover, the USA abandoned the Kyoto accord on global warming and rejected the participation in the International Criminal Court. The USA withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. According to the National Security Strategy, the USA now asserts that it has the right to attack and conquer sovereign countries that pose no threat, and to do so without international support. The USA has adopted a doctrine of preemptive war that challenges the norm of territorial integrity.<sup>17</sup>

Neither American democratic institutions nor the UN or the NATO prevented American aggression on Iraq. The Iraqi War (2003-) bluntly showed all the negative consequences of the Hobbesian world (although without a legal order comparable with domestic legal order), American power preponderance and American hegemony. This aggression also showed that the USA uses its power for self-gain rather than for the well-being of the world, and it showed that military preponderance does not guarantee peace.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the article "Firearms: the People's Liberty Teeth" by Larry Pratt, Executive Director of Gun Owners of America. The article is available at <http://gunowners.org/fs9402.htm> (accessed 16/5/2015).

<sup>17</sup> See Chomsky, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Empirical studies have not provided an unequivocal answer to the question whether power preponderance (and, accordingly, hegemony) contributes to peace. Certainly, the majority of these studies provide results in favor of power preponderance theory. For example, Lemke and Werner (1996: 237-8) argue that the probability of war between local contenders increases significantly when power parity is achieved. Weede (1976: 395), analyzing Asian dyads, claims that, "only overwhelming or ten-to-one preponderance substantially reduces the risk of war". Garnham's (1976) and Lemke's (1996) analyses of local wars also confirm power preponderance theory. Blainey (1973), Mihalka (1976), Mandel (1980), Moul (1988) and Kim (1991) claim too that empirical investigations confirm power preponderance theory. However, Siverson and Tennefoss's (1984), and Rasler and Thompson's (1994) empirical analy-

The USA power preponderance and hegemony enabled American aggression on Iraq. What are the consequences? Burnham et al. (2006) argue that the toll of post-invasion excess deaths is 650,000 people. Stiglitz (2008: 138) estimates that, by the year 2010, the total number of Iraqi deaths exceeded a million, and number of injured would exceed two million. Furthermore, 4.6 million people (one out of seven Iraqis) were uprooted from their homes (Stiglitz, 2008: 133).

It was not just Iraq that fell victim to American hegemony and American power preponderance. American allies were also victims because they were forced to participate in the aggression on Iraq. According to Chomsky (2003: 131), “support for a war carried out ‘unilaterally by America and its allies’ did not rise above 11 per cent in any [European] country”. In other words, European countries attacked Iraq, claiming to do it in order to bring democracy to the country, ignoring the will of 90 per cent of the people in their own countries. Why did they do it? Because the USA forced them to participate in the Iraqi War (2003-). According to Tripp (2004),

... during May 2003, a case claiming U.S. troops committed crimes in Iraq had been entered in a Belgian court on behalf of ten Iraqis against General Tommy Franks. In response, Bush officials threatened Belgium with economic punishment, including withholding NATO funds and/or moving NATO headquarters out of Brussels, if the case progressed. Belgium’s courts promptly responded to U.S. economic threats by throwing the Franks case out, and later, by July 2003, Belgium’s government announced it would change the controversial law that allowed its courts to try allegations of crimes committed during war that did not occur in Belgium nor directly involve Belgians.

The above-mentioned cases show that even American allies live under American “dictatorship”, not to mention the countries that are considered American enemies. Therefore, Ish-Shalom concludes that we live in a world of “international Hobbesian reality and dictatorial neoconservative empire” (ibidem: 554).

To return to Spinoza, a monarch himself can be equally dangerous as the state of nature. Or, in terms of international relations theories, even if American hegemony brings peace, American power abuse can be even more dangerous than world anarchy in which balance of power prevents wars.

So, Iraq and Afghanistan showed that power preponderance and hegemony do not guarantee peace. However, even if they did guarantee peace, it would not necessarily be desirable to have hegemony. Hegemony may cause democracy inside a country to become meaningless. For, if democratically elected officials obey the orders of a hegemon

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ses showed that the balance of power rather than power preponderance brings peace. In addition, the war in the former Yugoslavia also confirms the balance of power theory (see Antić, 2014).

rather than the will of the citizens, then there is little use of democracy. Furthermore, peace could be based on sheer fear. To illustrate, communist dictatorships were relatively peaceful. According to Antić (2010: 132), communist countries experienced less civil wars on their territories than other types of dictatorship, they also experienced less civil wars than any other type of democracy (presidential, semi-presidential, parliamentary). In a way, communist dictatorships were a fulfillment of a Hobbesian world. The full concentration of power prevented anarchy and civil wars and this concentration of power was based on legal order. Does it mean that communist dictatorship is better than democracy? And what is the difference between a communist dictatorship inside a country and a hegemony on the world scale? Maybe both can prevent wars but there are, certainly, many other dependent variables with which one can assess desirability of the concentration of power. In short, just as checks and balances prevent the abuse of power inside a country, the balance of power prevents the abuse of power on the world scale.

## 5. Conclusion

This article unites the discussions about Hobbesian theory, power preponderance theory and American hegemony. Why? Because all three theories have one thing in common: they argue in favor of the concentration of power. For Hobbes, the concentration of power in a monarch's hands prevents the return to the state of nature (or anarchy). Power preponderance theory argues that an overwhelming military superiority of one country (a unipolar world) is the best guarantee for world peace. Proponents of American hegemony argue that this hegemony is not just in the interest of the USA but also in the interest of the entire world because this hegemony enables peace and world commerce. In brief, American military preponderance and hegemony are, to an extent, a fulfillment of Hobbesian monarchy on the world scale (although without legal ground). Absolute monarchy prevents civil wars and American hegemony prevents international wars.

However, this article also presents a criticism of Hobbes, power preponderance theory and American hegemony. Spinoza showed that the concentration of power in the hands of a monarch (if people are unarmed) may cause the monarch's power abuse. The danger from this abuse is not lower than the danger of the state of nature. The balance of power theory argues that power preponderance enables aggression by the most powerful country on militarily inferior countries. American aggression on Iraq was the prime example of this situation. Furthermore, hegemony is not just dangerous for peace, it is dangerous in itself. For, if other countries must obey orders, fearing military power of a hegemon, they are not free. Peace, under the system of world hegemony, even if it exists, is similar to the peace based on dictatorship inside a country. In

both cases, peace is not a sufficient justification for the submission of people or entire nations. In short, Spinoza's theory, the balance of power theory, and multipolarity may produce a higher risk for civil and interstate wars. However, they are prerequisites for democracy inside a state and a relative national equality in the international realm.

To conclude, in spite of the fact that the world has changed significantly from the period when Hobbes and Spinoza wrote their theories, even today it is still valid that the absence of an effective government inside a country may cause anarchy and that absence of a hegemon may cause more wars in international relations. On the other hand, the absence of the balance of power may cause a dictatorship inside a country, and hegemony could also be a synonym for dictatorship over the world. Therefore, Spinoza's and Hobbes's theories about social contract and the state are still relevant for the analysis of international relations. Since globalization blurs differences between domestic and international politics, they could be even more important today – for the explanation of burning problems in the current state of international affairs – than during the period when they were written.

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## *Hobbes, teorija nadmoći i američka hegemonija*

### *Sažetak*

Ovaj članak prvo izlaže teorije koje zagovaraju koncentraciju moći. Na području političke filozofije to je Hobbesova teorija koja zagovara koncentraciju moći u rukama monarha, zasnovanu na pravu, kako bi se spriječio povratak u prirodno stanje. Na području teorija o međunarodnim odnosima to je teorija nadmoći koja tvrdi da nadmoć jedne države smanjuje vjerojatnost izbijanja ratova. Obje teorije, *de facto*, idu u prilog američkoj hegemoniji jer iz njih proizlazi to da ta hegemonija nije samo u interesu SAD-a, nego i u interesu svjetskog mira. Međutim ovaj članak tvrdi da je sustav ravnoteže i kontrole (*checks and balances*) važan ne samo unutar države nego i u međunarodnim odnosima.

**Ključne riječi:** Hobbes, teorija nadmoći, hegemonija SAD-a, Spinoza, ravnoteža snaga, ravnoteža i kontrola.