

DISSECTING HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY AND ITS RELEVANCE IN AFRICA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of historical hegemons in International Relations, analysing the basic tenets of hegemonic stability theory, investigating its area of strength, weakness and their contributions to global stability. Hegemonic Stability Theory posits that the stability of the international system is closely tied to the dominance of a single, powerful state, or hegemon, which provides global public goods such as security and open markets. This research explores the origins and key arguments of Hegemonic Stability theory; primarily rooted in the works of Charles Kindleberger and Robert Gilpin, who suggest that hegemonic power is crucial for maintaining international order and preventing systemic chaos. The study adopts secondary source of data collection and uses content analysis as the method of analysis. The study critiques Hegemonic Stability theory by addressing challenges such as the rise of multipolarity, global interdependence, and regionalism, which question the necessity of a single hegemon for stability. The study observes that although the earlier major proponents of hegemonic stability theory lay emphasis on a single hegemon as a stabiliser, two or more coalition of willing states can undertake the task of providing for the system in the interest of all. To this end, it concludes that Africa needs a hegemon, single or coalition, willing to provide leadership and undertake the expenses of providing order within the region to ensure stability that would pave the way for the much-needed development.

Keywords: Hegemony stability theory, International Relations,

Introduction

International Relations, as a discipline, is richly endowed with many contemporary theories that are relevant to its practice. Such theories include idealism, realism, Marxism, behavioralism, constructivism, among others. Others include hegemonic stability theory that emphasise the role of hegemon(s) in the stabilisation of the international system, providing order in the interest of all. Many authors have commented on hegemons and their roles in the stability of the international system leading to the theory of “hegemonic stability”. The theory is traced to Charles Kindleberger's *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* (1973). He was the first author that popularised this theory (Brown and Ainley, 2005) when he argued, “for the world economy to be stabilised, there has to be a stabiliser” (Kindleberger 1973, 305). He further argues that the hegemon provides the market for distressed goods, producing a steady if not countercyclical flow of capital, maintaining a rediscount mechanism for providing liquidity when the monetary system is frozen in panic, managing the structure of foreign exchange rates, and providing a degree of coordination of domestic monetary policies (Kindleberger, 1981). A single hegemon is necessary because, “the difficulties and costs of bargaining between two or more states are likely to thwart international cooperation” (Lake 1993, 463). However, the argument that there has to be a single stabiliser for order to be guaranteed in the system has been challenged by other scholars such as Lake (1993), Strange (2009), Grunberg (1990), Keohane (1984), Snidal (1985), and, of course, this researcher. This

will be attended to later in the chapter while, for now, emphasis shall be placed on analysing the theory and deconstructing its attributes for easier assimilation and understanding.

Hegemony is the enrolment of others in the exercise of your power by convincing, cajoling, and coercing them that they should want what you want (Agnew 2005). The important attributes of a hegemon are size, population, economic strength, military might, ideas and political will (Francis 2006). This entails that there should be a preponderant state[s] among others that are weaker in a system that looks like an 'open club' society where every actor is on the stage performing according to one's ability and dictates, conditioned by the national interest. With no superior government in the system that other actors are accountable to, the system seems dangerous and rough, competitive and prone to violence, leading to the need for a regulator[s], leader[s] or indeed, a guardian[s]. Such demands the attention of a strong-willed state[s] that has/have the capacity and the large heart to confront the challenges affecting the entire system either to her advantage and perhaps, allow others benefit from her/their efforts. It is for the above reason that a hegemon must possess the power: economic, military, political, cultural, technological, demographic, *et cetera*, which indicates that she/they has/have the capacity and will to achieve interests that may be in her/their interest or may be mutual. This is necessary because the challenges facing the international system, in general, and African region' in particular, are enormous and only a hegemon or hegemons with strong character and will could commit himself or themselves to tackling such challenges head-on and achieve some measure of success. Consequently, it is important to understand that “hegemony characteristically imposes an extraordinary tax on the world leader, which must bear the costs of maintaining economic and political order and preserving an empire” (Kegley and Wittkoff 1997, 69).

Statement of the Problem

Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) posits that the international system is more likely to remain stable and peaceful when a single dominant power, or "hegemon," governs the global order. This hegemon provides public goods such as economic stability, open trade systems, and security guarantees, often at its own cost, to maintain the *status quo*. The theory suggests that without a hegemon, global anarchy could ensue, leading to instability and conflict among states competing for power and resources.

The relevance of HST in contemporary international relations is contested. While it was instrumental in explaining the post-World War II order, particularly under the leadership of the United States, recent geopolitical shifts—such as the rise of multipolarity, economic interdependence, and the emergence of new powers like China—challenge the unipolar hegemonic model. The decline of U.S. global dominance raises questions about the applicability of HST in today's world. Thus, the core problem lies in evaluating whether HST still provides a valid framework for understanding international stability, given the complexities of 21st-century global politics. How does the theory account for emerging powers, shifting alliances, and evolving economic structures? Can global stability be maintained without a single hegemon, or is a return to a multipolar world likely to increase conflict and instability?

This study seeks to critically assess the relevance of Hegemonic Stability Theory in the light of current geopolitical realities and explore whether a redefined or alternative theory might better explain the contemporary international system.

Review of Related Literature

The literature review of Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) in this paper emphasises various dimensions of leadership and hegemony in international relations, focusing on the essential attributes and consequences of a hegemonic power's role. The review of related literature on the topic integrates insights from multiple scholars, highlighting the key components of HST which basically are: dominance, power, legitimacy, and cooperation.

In the area of dominance and stability, HST views global stability as being reliant on the dominance of a single powerful state, or hegemon. This hegemon must demonstrate both capacity and will to lead unilaterally and foster an international order. A hegemon acts not only to stabilise the international economy through openness and cooperation but also to provide public goods like security and economic stability. As noted by Lake (1993) and D'Anieri (2010), stability in the international system arises from the hegemon's ability to exercise power and influence over others, ensuring a degree of order.

The theory places significant importance on the accumulation and use of power. Power is multidimensional, encompassing military, economic, political, demographic, and informational power. As emphasized by Deutsch (1968), the "weight" of power—the ability to change outcomes—lies at the core of the hegemon's success. The hegemon must utilize this power for the provision of public goods and for influencing global policies, as noted by Morgenthau (1993) and Pedersen (2002).

A hegemon's success also depends on its ability to gain consent and legitimacy, which is closely linked to its capacity to influence others through non-coercive means (soft power). Morgenthau (1993) argued that hegemons often use influence to shift other governments' policies, rather than relying on direct control. The hegemon, although dominant, cannot impose rule by force indefinitely; thus, legitimacy becomes critical, especially through strategic use of soft power and cooperation.

Another critical aspect of HST is Cooperation and Collective Action. Pedersen (2002) notes that hegemonic powers, even though they lead, often require collaboration with other strong and willing states to share the burden of maintaining international order. Hegemonic leadership also involves multilateral approaches, where collective action ensures that responsibilities are shared among powerful and less powerful states. This is especially necessary to avoid the "overstretch" problem where a single hegemon cannot manage global responsibilities alone (Francis 2006).

As argued by Chua (2009), tolerance is another key factor in the rise and sustenance of hegemonic power. Tolerance in this context refers both to the inclusion of foreigners (strategic tolerance) and to the acceptance of other states in the international system, even if they do not fully align with the hegemon's interests. Openness, which involves transparency and inclusion in decision-making, fosters trust and mitigates suspicions that smaller states may have about the hegemon's dominance (Lake 1993). This openness helps the hegemon build confidence and ensure smoother global interactions.

Indeed, the primary responsibility of the hegemon, according to HST, is to provide public goods—whether it is security, economic stability, or other forms of human security. The theory acknowledges that these goods benefit not only the hegemon but also weaker states (Snidal 1985). The hegemon, or a privileged group of states, often bears the cost of providing these goods, but they do so in the interest of maintaining global order (Lake 1993). The review stresses the importance of liberalism as a virtue in sustaining hegemony. Strange (2009), highlights how hegemonic powers, such as the United States, have historically leaned toward liberal economic policies that benefit the international system. Liberalism allows the hegemon to influence others and to encourage stability by promoting open markets, cooperation, and collective action.

The literature also addresses potential challenges to HST. For example, while Kindleberger argues that public goods are best provided by a single hegemon, Lake (1993) and Haggard and Simmons (1987), question whether a single actor is necessary. Instead, collective action—where a group of willing states share responsibility—can also ensure the provision of public goods, particularly in cases where no clear hegemon exists. Strange (2009), mediates this debate by asserting that collective action is only effective when the hegemon actively chooses to lead.

Overall, this literature review underscores the importance of hegemony in maintaining international order through power, legitimacy, cooperation, and the provision of public goods. While the hegemon is central to ensuring stability, the success of such leadership depends not only on hard power but also on openness, tolerance, and the ability to foster cooperation among states.

The Hegemonic Stability Theory in Contemporary International Relations

Hegemonic stability theory comprises leadership and hegemony theories. Countries can be leaders and hegemons at the same time (Lake, 1993). The theory views stability in dominance (D'Anieri 2010), capacity, will and legitimacy (Brown with Ainley, 2005) as well as willingness to exercise unilateral leadership and to act rather than react (Rourke, 2008) to succeed. Openness (Lake, 1993), co-operation (Pedersen, 2002), and tolerance (Chua, 2009) are also some of the major attributes that a hegemonic stabiliser[s] must possess to accommodate and by extension sustain her leadership over others. D'Anieri (2010) sees it as another strand of realist thought which finds the stability results from unipolarity, in which one state is clearly more powerful and able to act to ensure some degree of order in the system. The theory entails, first, the presence of a dominant actor that will lead to the provision of a stable international regime of free trade and, second, although the dominant leader benefits from this situation (i.e., it turns a net “profit” from providing the good), smaller states gain even more (Snidal, 1985). Therefore, in hegemonic stability theory, there is the existence of a hegemon and the weaker ones that are not her subordinates, but simply weaker in strength and capability. This does not make them inferior. They may be influenced or led, by the hegemon, but may not always be willing and happy to be ruled by force. As such, the degree of success achieved by the hegemon and the length of such leadership may, to a large extent, depend on her capability (military and economic) as well as ability to carry others along through soft power.

The benefit of hegemonic stability theory is that it provides a fertile ground for analytical and empirical investigation in international relations (Snidal, 1985). By linking the economy's structure and evolution with the international distribution of power, the theory combines political factors and economic outcomes and therefore satisfies the need for a truly political international economics; ... holding that cooperation and a well-functioning world economy are dependent on a certain kind of political structure, a structure characterised by the dominance of a single actor (Grunberg 1990, 431). Consequently, “hegemony provides some order similar to a central government in the international system: reducing anarchy, deterring aggression, promoting free trade, and providing a hard currency that can be used as a world standard” (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2010, 58). Although the hegemon acts like a central government to regulate the system, it is important to stress that others are not the hegemon's subjects.

Therefore, the first major elements of hegemonic stability theory are power and influence. Karl Deutsch sees them as the leading instruments at the disposal of major actors in international relations. Consequently, he identifies four chief dimensions of power as its weight, domain, range and scope and concludes that of these, weight is closest to intuitive notion which most of us have when we think of power

(Deutsch, 1968). He stressed that the weight of the power or influence of an actor over some process is the extent to which he can change the probability of its outcome. Power goes with influence and by extension, dominance. Having accumulated power and being dominant, the hegemon is tempted to utilise the power since, according to Lake (1993), hegemony is necessarily coercive and based on the exercise of power. Power, as used above, does not necessarily mean, military power alone. Political, economic and information power are also important. Demographic power is equally important. In essence, human and material resources are required by a hegemon for success. This is because the concentration of material resources contributes to stability (Pedersen, 2002).

The importance is appreciated more understanding that dominance by a hegemonic power constitutes the optimal situation for ensuring and maintaining an open and stable world economy (Grunberg, 1990). Therefore, the acquisition and use of power and influence are the most important factors required of a hegemon. Its use, as expressed above, is important because the acquisition of power alone does not confer on a state the status of a hegemon. Power is meant to be used in the advancement of national interest – which could be the projection of state power or in the provision of public good – a role the hegemon plays for the others to ensure the stability of the system. The relevance of a hegemon to the system lies in her possession of power and her ability to utilise it to influence others for the provision of order in the system.

Consequently, Morgenthau (1993, 33) argues that whatever the material objectives of a foreign policy, such as the acquisition of sources of raw materials, the control of sea lanes, or territorial changes, they always entail control of the actions of others through influence over their minds. Citing the US loans and assistance to Poland during the Cold War, he maintains that the purpose was not necessarily economic or financial but “rather to enable such countries to move towards a degree of independence of the influence of the Soviet Union” (Morgenthau 1993, 35). In other words, power could be used to influence a change of course of government's action against their initial preferred option. If power and influence are relevant in international relations, it becomes necessary that a hegemon shall utilise them to effect changes in governments' policies that are repugnant and detrimental to the system. Hence, with the weight of power accruing to Nigeria and South in Africa, they have the potency to influence many African states that have either failed in their responsibilities to their people (failed states syndrome) or failed to recognise that they owe responsibilities to their people, to the benefit of all Africans.

On the other hand, tolerance is another important factor in the rising and sustenance of hegemons. Tolerance means letting very different kinds of people live, work, and prosper in your society – even if only for instrumental or strategic reasons (Chua, 2009). Chua, historically, narrates how, from the first hegemon – Achaemenid to the present 'hyperpower' –the United States benefitted from strategic tolerance. Chua (2009, 322) believes that “if the key to wealth was military might, then the key to military might was strategic tolerance”. Tolerance is of two types. The first is the ability to consider allowing 'others' to belong to your group; that is, ability to accommodate foreigners to live and work, with relative freedom, within your state. Often, such foreigners are experts in their chosen fields of endeavour. Undoubtedly, the system needs them for progress and sustenance. Chua's work proves this. The second is the ability to accommodate other states that are willing and unwilling to partner and join the leadership of the hegemon. Such tolerance gives them a sense of belonging and makes them have the feeling of being stakeholders in the issues that concern them. This is necessary because “hegemony is not omnipotence” (Layne 2006, 43). Consequently, carrying others along helps to legitimise the actions and beliefs of the hegemon[s]. Indeed, the benefits of tolerance to the hegemon[s] are enormous.

As a corollary, co-operation and liberalism are also important because the status and construction of hegemony is not permanent, but affected by the ever-changing global and regional forces (Francis, 2006).

Responsibilities shared reduce the burden of the system on a single state. Over-stretching the hegemon makes her incapable of defending her interests and obligations simultaneously. Hegemons may require co-operation among other strong and willing states and allies to shape the system to their liking. At some other times, a hegemon or “unipolar power does so with allies and other forms of multipolar support when possible” (Rourke 2008, 51). The aim is to share responsibilities and ensure collective action that works more for integration and order rather than for disintegration and disorder. To opt for cooperation is not a sign of weakness but extending the hands of fellowship to others to avoid some treacherous activities inherent in the international system. Similarly, liberalism is a virtue that should be practised by the hegemon to ensure sustainability and survival. With liberalism, the hegemon and others benefit without endangering the system. Liberalism provides the opportunity to accommodate others who are expected to benefit from such co-operation in one way or the other.

Openness is another strong and appealing element for the sustenance of the hegemon. It is appealing in the sense that being open reduces suspicion and enhances belief and support, confidence and trust of the led on the activities of the hegemonic leader[s]. The self-help nature of the international system makes weaker states inherently suspicious of the activities of the major powers. Similarly, medium powers fear over-dominance by major powers. As such, they always strive to either weaken the powers of the hegemon or to be included in the fair share of the spoils of power and influence. To mitigate such, openness becomes an important instrument to be deployed by the hegemon to enhance her leadership, besides serving as a confidence-building measure. Lake (1993) remarks that hegemonic systems are most likely to be open as the single advanced country will prefer free trade and the others will either recognise that competing for political power is useless or succumb to the hegemon's blandishments. It is important to state that some of the attributes of hegemonic stability theory, like openness, cooperation, tolerance, strengthen the theory, especially, in practice, rather than weaken it since theories are meant to identify and proffer solutions to such problems.

Therefore, the goal of hegemonic stability theory is to ensure the provision of the public good, collective goods (Snidal, 1985), international regimes (Honghua, n.d.) or the international infrastructure (Lake, 1993). Such public good could be the provision of the security of states and their economic interests (where states are relatively stable) or human security (especially in Africa where disease, hunger, poverty, genocide, state failure and other forms of human insecurity exist). Snidal (1985) notes that the public good ensures 'cooperative' outcomes that make states better off than they would be without hegemonic power. It is important to stress that such public good may be provided by a more powerful and interested hegemon or by a combination of willing states that have the interest and capability to undertake the challenges of the system, without minding if others benefited as well. The willing states, especially in Africa where many dehumanising challenges exist, could cooperate in an ad-hoc, bilateral, and or institutionalised arrangement, to deploy their resources for the common good, bearing in mind that if they do not do so, no one else would do it even as the cost of not acting is higher. It is of a moral responsibility and a strategic interest. It is moral because, though they do not fall within the scope of your territory, they appeal to the senses of the black race as a people. It is strategic because when the countries fail to provide the common good, such failed states and their citizens pose grave threats to the more advanced peaceful states in the areas of harbouring and breeding terrorists, immigration challenges, asylum/refugee challenges, *et cetera*. The challenges posed by such to stronger and more stable states make it imperative that they look beyond their borders to provide such common goods. Indeed, the more stable states gain more than the weaker states because if they eventually fail, they threaten the survival of the more stable states within their region. Certainly, this is a situation, in international relations, where the poor takes advantage of the rich instead of the rich feeding on the poor. For rather than the strong exploiting the weak,

it is the weak who exploit the strong (Haggard and Simmons, 1987).

Kindleberger sees such public goods as better provided by a single hegemon that acts as a stabiliser but this is not always the case. A question could be posed as follows: where there is the absence of a single hegemon, should the public good suffer or be sacrificed? Lake attempts an answer to the question, arguing that “a single leader is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the provision of an international public good” (Lake 1993, 463). For Haggard and Simmon (1987, 503), the hegemon constitutes a “privileged group” for which the cost of supplying the public good is less than the benefit”. Their argument is significant because they emphasised the need for a privileged group to take the lead as the best lies more in sharing the cost of and planning for the provision of the public good, especially since two good heads are better than one. Strange (2009) mediates between the extremes, arguing that collective action is still possible only when the United States, as a hegemon, takes the lead – when in short, it still chooses to act as leader. The hegemon leads, guides, and supports others while the others follow towards the realisation of the common good.

The type of hegemon notwithstanding, whether as a benevolent or coercive hegemon, the aim is to secure the system for the benefit of all, though the costs and benefits may or may not be evenly distributed. The unevenness notwithstanding, such public security or access to the market would be appreciated more when one compares the scenario of disorder and confusion to that of relative peace provided by the leadership of the hegemon alone or in collaboration with the other relatively stronger members of the system. At a period of disorder, all efforts and resources are channelled towards restoring order while development is stagnated, delayed and occasionally disfigured. However, the hegemon should be cautious about how such goods are distributed to ensure that she is not exploitative of others. This is because if other states do not benefit or seem not to be benefitting from the public goods, they work towards the hegemon's downfall. Against this backdrop, Snidal avers:

When the conditions specified in the theory of hegemonic stability apply, all states will welcome leadership and seek to take a “free ride” on it. In other circumstances, when power is distributed asymmetrically but hegemony is exercised in ways that do not benefit all states, subordinate states will chafe under the (coercive) leadership. One obvious empirical implication is that in the former case smaller powers will continue to support a declining hegemonic leader; in the latter case they will work to hasten its demise (Snidal 1985, 582).

Therefore, relative stability and gain is required from and for the hegemon and others for order to be sustained. This is in the interest of all but someone has to bear the responsibility of providing and maintaining the cherished public good. Thus, the hegemon shall be willing and capable of bearing a larger burden of the international system or of the region, complaining less and being benevolent to let others benefit from her or their labour. Hence, the hegemon(s) bears the cost of the public goods “regardless of the contributions of others, beneficiaries of the system will have an incentive to free-ride” (Haggard and Simmons 1987, 502-503).

The rationale behind the hegemon's provision of the public good in the form of a “quasi government” has been questioned. Some commentators believe that in performing such responsibilities, the hegemon[s] cannot escape the temptation of exploiting others. Accordingly,

even if provision of the public good and its corresponding taxation scheme is a Pareto-superior move (i.e., leaves all as well or better off) there is no longer any reason to assume that the distribution of benefits favours smaller states. The hegemonic actor, with its ability to distribute costs among states, can alter the distribution of benefits to favour itself. Second, the new

distribution of (net) benefits could even be exploitative in the sense that costs imposed on subordinate states may exceed the benefits those states receive from provision of the good. Indeed, it is unclear why the hegemon would use its powers only for the provision of public goods – why would it not also expropriate a wider range of private goods to benefit itself at the expense of other states? (Snidal 1985, 588).

Snidal's question raises a fundamental issue with regards to relative cost and gain in the international system dominated and influenced by the hegemon. While he notes that the weaker states may not necessarily be “free riders” as expected since the hegemon often have the capacity to impose levies on them that may not be commensurate with the gains they derive in the system, the large chunk of the gains is for the hegemon and his allies. Using the gains of global trade, Goldstein and Pevehouse (2010) believe that in the time of globalisation, the hegemon is the highest beneficiary since he has the capital, expertise, and finance that sustain the system. Since he is “the most advanced state in productivity and technology, a hegemon does not fear competition from industries and other states; it fears only that its own superior goods will be excluded from competing in other states. Thus, hegemons use their powers to achieve free trade and the political stability that supports free trade” (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2010, 59).

In other words, hegemons have great interest in guaranteeing order in the system for market and security. After all, it is believed that the cause of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the outbreak of World War II in 1939 was due to the absence of a willing hegemon to provide order. Hence, the hegemon benefits more in securing markets for her excess goods, new boundaries for her new ideas and prestige for her political and economic dominance of the system. On the other hand, the importance of the public good, especially security, to states is overwhelming and could make states overlook the exploitative tendencies of the hegemon. Hence, Gilpin (1985) argues that subordinate states will accept their exploitation as long as the costs of being exploited are less than the costs of overthrowing the hegemonic power.

Consequently, the more benevolent a hegemon is in providing for the public good, the more chances it has in legitimising its rule and influence over others and by extension, survival/success. On the other hand, the more autocratic, exploitative and coercive it is, the more others seek options of rebellion and withdrawal. However, if the cost of overthrowing it, as I stated earlier – insecurity, for instance, is higher, they would not mind remaining under its leadership because insecurity (state or human or even both) is costlier. Hence, it is more cost effective to have a hegemon in control, whether benevolent or coercive, to avoid security threats that endanger the survival of weaker states than to have a system of disorder. For instance, it is believed that “the most important collective good provided by American hegemony was the increased certainty about future patterns of behaviour that hegemony brought” (Honghua n.d.). It is for the above reason that the privileged preponderant state[s] tries/try to ensure that the system is guaranteed fighting for its survival and maintenance knowing that, as Francis quoted Gilpin, “hegemonic leadership is the cement that holds the system together; hence decline means instability and disorder” (Francis 2006, 134). To ensure the sustenance of the system, it provides both leadership and regulates the actions of others because if a hegemon fails, political instability follows.

To achieve such goal, the hegemon employs several strategies. These strategies are discussed below.

- a. **Leadership:** A hegemon is an asset to international order. This is because, as Rourke argues, a hegemonic power attempts to shape the international scene to its liking and as such must be proactive rather than reacting always to the initiative of others (Rourke, 2008). To effectively do this, as stated above, leadership is required. The leadership must be a responsible one to avoid collapse, orchestrated by the activities of a combination of aggrieved members of the international system or the over-stretch of the hegemon or even a combination of other factors. The style and approach

adopted in providing such leadership, determines to a large extent, the success of the leader[s]. If the leader uses excessive power, others will conspire to undermine her influence but if she is benevolent and accommodating, less acrimony and friction may be encountered. The style employed to influence others becomes very important, because as already stated, hegemonic leadership is seen as the cement that holds the system together (Francis, 2006). Thus, leadership, as a role and strategy of the hegemon, is seen as a responsibility (Kindleberger 1981; Grunberg 1990). Hence, it is possible that countries can be leaders and hegemons at the same time (Lake, 1993).

- b. Provision of common good and making sacrifices:** Kindleberger (1981) assigns the hegemon the following functions: providing a market for distressed goods, producing a steady if not countercyclical flow of capital, maintaining a rediscount mechanism for providing liquidity when the monetary system is frozen in panic, managing the structure of foreign exchange rates, and providing a degree of coordination of domestic monetary policies. The functions are aimed at stabilising the international economy. For Lake, a stable international economy requires a medium of exchange and, secondarily, a store of value; must have sufficient liquidity in the long term to allow for economic growth, in the medium term to counter business cycles, and in the short term to manage panics; and must define and protect basic property rights for goods in transit and overseas (portfolio and direct) assets (Lake, 1993). Although both works dwelt on the provision of a stable international economy, they are no less important to this work as the economy is the backbone of political and military strength. Once the economy suffers, other aspects of the state's life are weakened. The collapse of the Soviet Union is a good instance.
- c. Maintenance of the system through the control of international institutions, regimes, and the rules of the system:** Hegemons can operate through the control of multilateral institutions and rules guiding them. Ikenberry suggests that the hegemon should operate on a “rules-based order” around institutions holding that the hegemon gets three benefits from doing so which includes; first, they can reduce the costs of enforcement of hegemonic rule. Second, the hegemonic state enhances its legitimacy. Third ... the institutions might continue to provide favourable outcomes for the leading state even after its power capacities have declined in relative terms (Ikenberry 2008, 118-119). He argues that in a bipolar or multipolar system, powerful states rule in the process of leading a coalition of states in balancing against other states (ibid. 127). On the other hand, “a structure characterised by the dominance of a single actor ... constitutes the optimal situation for ensuring and maintaining an open and stable world economy” (Grunberg 1990, 431). The point being made is that rules are important in ensuring the stability of the system. The area of disagreement is the best form of its enforcement; whether by a group or an individual state and whether or not such can be performed by a powerful state within an institution or alone.

Hegemons condition the operations of the institutions they belong to. The rules and survival of such institutions depend, extensively, on them. The failure of the League of Nations could be attributed, partly, to the inability of the then powers, France and England, to provide leadership and execute the rules of the organisation against offenders, partly due to the inability of the United States to be a member of the League. Similarly, there was no power willing to undertake the provision of the 'common good', leading to a situation of self-help on all members of the institution.

Consequently, a hegemon influences and enforces the rules of the organisations they belong to in the interest of the system. This is done through positive and negative sanctions (Haggard and Simmons, 1987) or the application of soft rules within and through co-operative arrangements based on a long-term strategy (Pedersen, 2002). Sidiropoulos(1997) argues that hegemony does not have to mean domination. This is important because the use of such institutions grant the hegemon the legitimacy it wants as a legitimate power has a better chance to succeed than equivalent illegitimate power (Morgenthau, 1993). Nye (1990) observes that if a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. That helps the hegemon to enforce the rules of the organisations with ease with positive and negative sanctions; it even extracts payment from smaller states to maintain the regime (Haggard and Simmons, 1987).

Limitations of Hegemonic Stability Theory

There are several weaknesses associated with the hegemonic stability theory. First, there is the problem of measurement of the sharing of the public good between the hegemon and others within the system. The measurement of the benefits accruing to the leadership of the hegemon is difficult. Because of that, there is the possibility of hegemons becoming exploiters of weaker states and because it is difficult to determine how each benefit from the system. Globalisation provides a classical instance of it. Under globalisation, there is the assumption that all benefit but how much each benefit is difficult to be ascertained and tabulated. It makes the determination of relative gains and costs difficult in the system. To that effect, hegemonic stability theory is accused of being “nothing more than simple comparative statics. A fuller, dynamic explanation would specify more precisely how the system moves through time—including a consideration of the role of lags (perhaps induced by the conventional aspects of regimes) and of the changing strategic incentives for both providers and free riders in response to exogenous changes in the distribution of power” (Snidal, 1985).

Similarly, the argument that it is only a single hegemon that is required to guarantee the safety of the system and international regimes is faulty. Public goods may not necessarily be provided by a single state, a stabiliser. It can, as well, be provided by a privileged group or regional hegemons for the interest of the continent. Similarly, it is incorrect to assume that a single country must always pursue the fight for a common good. Indeed, the hegemon, mindful of her selfish interest, could go against the tenets of the public good for her selfish interests. Instances abound where the US, as a world hegemon, has gone against world interest to protect her domestic interests. For instance, the US imposes tariffs on trade against free trade and often ignores international treaties like the Kyoto Protocol Treaty on Environment, withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, *et cetera*. Certainly, those issues mentioned above, were not in the common interest but in her interest. In the same vein, it is not only a country that could provide for the common good. A group of states can equally do so and more effectively, too, because each act as a check against the excesses of the other to ensure that the good is really, public. Thus, “if a privileged subgroup exists such that each member benefits from providing the good even without cooperation from other members, the public good will be provided” (Haggard and Simmons 1987, 503). Nigeria and South Africa have shown a classical example in Africa providing leadership for the establishment of African institutions and the transformation of others for the benefit of Africa (Ogo & Ani, 2015); Ogo (2018); Ade-Ibijola & Ogo (2020).

Equally, the theory has been criticised on the basic assumption that regimes collapse with the weakening of the hegemon. Kindleberger (1981), Strange (1987), Wyne (2006), Fergusson (2006), and Mandelbaum (2004) argue that regimes and global governance are tied to the roles the hegemon (the United States)

plays in the international system. This is not totally correct. To an extent, it is correct when we talk about creating and maintaining regimes and order in the international system. The hegemon uses its resources and influence to create and maintain such regimes as long as it retains its strength and is still interested in and willing to perform the roles. However, such is not the case if regimes have been institutionalised through the activities of the international organisations and internalised through identity and interest re-making, like the neo-liberals and the constructivists would have it. For instance, such institutions might continue to provide favourable outcomes for the leading state even after its power capacities have declined in relative terms (Ikenberry, 2008). In such circumstances, such regimes become internalised as norms, accepted and practised by the international community whether the hegemon remains strong or declines. This is the benefit garnered from the strengthening of international institutions that could condition the activities of the members of the international community, the powerful and the weak alike.

For instance, as a hegemon, the United States did not use her nuclear weapons against Vietnam even under the threat of defeat. Similarly, though she went into Iraq, under the coalition-of-the-willing strategy, she had to come back to the United Nations for approval to occupy and re-construct Iraq. Such are the roles international institutions could play to strengthen and even destabilise the capacity of the hegemon to become a dictator. Equally, since the status of the hegemon is not constant, it could weaken or even another could emerge, the institution becomes the embodiment of the regimes, norms, principles *et cetera* that could continue to regulate the activities of the system. On this note, regimes may not collapse or be destabilised with the downfall or weakening of the hegemon as long as strong international institutions and civil society organisations exist to maintain order in the system.

Equally, the theory has been criticised on the assumption that the hegemon acts as a quasi-government that imposes taxes and collects levies from other independent states with the idea of providing common goods and others being free-riders. It is difficult for the hegemon to be both a quasi-government taxing others, a benevolent leader as well as allow free-riders without exploiting such opportunities especially when countries are always interested in their selfish interests. Thus, as acknowledged by Snidal:

the dominant power not only provides the good, it is capable of extracting contributions toward the good from subordinate states. In effect, the hegemonic power constitutes a quasi-government by providing public goods and taxing other states to pay for them. Subordinate states will be reluctant to be taxed but, because of the hegemonic state's preponderant power, will succumb. Indeed, if they receive net benefits (i.e., a surplus of public good benefits over the contribution extracted from them), they may recognise hegemonic leadership as legitimate and so reinforce its performance and position (1985, 587).

Moreover, all members of the international system may not benefit equally. It is of more benefit to the hegemon if the public order is preserved. For instance, terrorists are bred in failed or weak states that threaten the security of the advanced countries. The 11 September terrorist attack on the United States is a good test case. Similarly, in crises moments within the territories of the weaker states, displaced persons and refugees are produced. They seek refuge and protection in the advanced countries putting pressure on the economy, welfare and social benefits of the people thereby triggering social unrests and criminality. The exploitative nature of the hegemon acting as a quasi-government makes weaker states to see “hegemony as an infringement of state sovereignty, and the order it creates may seem unjust or illegitimate” (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2010, 59). Thus, hegemony may not just be exploitative but selfish because “with its acquisition of unrivalled power, the hegemon reshapes the existing system by creating and enforcing rules to preserve not only world order but also the hegemon's own dominant position (Kegley and Wittkopf 1997, 69). To such extent, the hegemon acts in the system not just for the

sake and interest of the system but mindful of her own interest, the status that her new role accords her and the advantages therein. Therefore, he may act, not necessarily, based on common good but based on his selfish interest.

As a corollary, hegemony works well when there is boom in business, when there is security and when there is relative gain for all. It is acknowledged that “[t]rade policy tended to be more liberal when business was booming than when it hit a slump (as in the 1870s), regardless of the power or attitude of the leading economic power” (Strange 2009, 560). At such times, everyone is willing to cooperate. However, at odd times when there is relative disorder, insecurity or world depression, everyone struggles to achieve one's interest. The hegemon, unless still very strong, as the U.S. was after the world depression of the 1930s and 40s, would not be willing to accommodate and bear the cost of running the system in the interest of others. At such periods, hegemonic stability theory seems to have no clue as to how the public good should be procured, sustained, and or maintained.

The next major criticism against hegemonic stability theory is that it is capitalist-oriented, focused, and indoctrinated. The common good, as espoused, is not that known to the Marxists when they talked about each giving according to his ability and receiving according to his need. The common good being canvassed is the one that provides the opportunity for the hegemon to benefit from the system while allowing 'free riders' to benefit as well. The sharing of the spoils of the stability is not and cannot be equal, of course, just like the responsibilities are not. Just as the argument above portend, the appeal to hegemonic stability theory is more in the interest of the hegemon than in the interest of the others in the system. The hegemon benefits by entrenching the ruling regime, her value system, ideology, political and economic institutions on the other members of the system. By so doing, the capitalist ideology is programmed to benefit more than the other ideologies. This is because it is the ideology of the leading hegemon. The negative effect can be seen from the Huntington's *Clash of Civilisation* and the elaborate activities of international terrorists as evidenced in so many advanced capitalist states and their close allies. The September 11 terrorist attack on the US, the London attacks, France, Spain, Nigeria, *et cetera*, attacks bear the marks and semblances of terrorist attacks on capitalism and its associates. Ideology and religion become enduring enemies, replacing the initial all out ideological war, the Cold War.

Conclusion

The shortcoming of the theory notwithstanding, it is still relevant to the study of international relations because it emphasises the place of leadership, cooperation and collaboration in the provision of the public good. Order, in the international system, is necessary for development and can be provided through the significant leadership of those that have preponderant power; economic, political, military, cultural, *et cetera* that are willing and capable of undertaking the responsibility of providing for all, notwithstanding the cost. Africa has not fared well in the international community owing to non-existence of a hegemon capable of tackling the ills of the region. From unfavourable trade to colonialism, to non-viable independence, to civil wars, failed states syndrome, genocide, the emerging threats of terrorism, and many others, she needs a sense of direction from within. Africa needs a hegemon or a combination of states that can act as a hegemon to offer leadership and bring sanity to the region. Nigeria and South Africa had already demonstrated that it is capable although lack of continuity is there owing to change of governments. Hence, Ogo (2018) argues that African states find it difficult to continue with lofty and ideal programmes that promote the welfare of Africans towards strong participation in governance, especially when the promoters of such programmes had left offices. A state or two must be willing to become a hegemonic stabiliser, building institutions, taking greater share of the burden economically and militarily

to proffer African solutions to Africa's problems. This is bearing in mind that hegemonic leadership is the “cement that holds the system together” (Francis 2006, 134). Indeed, Africa may find solution to the incessant challenges stunting its development on the leadership strength of a willing and strong hegemonic stabiliser.

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