

THE POSITION OF EURASIA IN THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER: AN EMERGING HISTORICAL BLOC

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the potentials of Eurasia in becoming a historical bloc within the current world order. The theoretical framework of this paper is based on Robert Cox's Critical Theory, which claims that a change in World order may occur through the "war of position" between counter historical blocs. Eurasia with its many emerging economies and vast energy supplies is one of the most dynamic regions of the World. Moreover, besides improving intra-regional relations, Eurasia also endorses a multipolar and pluralist World order. While direct instruments of this endorsement are organizations like Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Development Bank; indirect instruments are organizations like BRICS and New Development Bank. In the light of Critical Theory, international and inter-regional organizations play a crucial role in constituting historical blocs. Therefore, this regional dynamism in Eurasia deserves a close analysis.

This paper pursues a holistic approach. For this reason, after introducing main characteristics of current world order within the light of the abovementioned theory, in this paper, I am aiming to focus on relational and institutional perspectives, rather than to evaluate Eurasian countries individually,

Keywords: Historical bloc, Eurasia, SCO, Robert Cox.

MEVCUT DÜNYA DÜZENİNDE AVRASYANIN KONUMU: BELİREN TARİHSEL BLOK

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada Avrasya'nın bir tarihsel blok oluşturmak yönündeki potansiyeli incelenmektedir. Bu inceleme, Robert Cox'un kurucularından olduğu ve dünya düzeninde değişimin "mevzi savaşı" aracılığıyla gerçekleşeceğini belirten Eleştirel Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramı'na dayanarak yapılmıştır. Yükselen ekonomileri ve sahip olduğu enerji kaynaklarıyla dünyanın en dinamik bölgelerinden olan Avrasya, bölgesel ilişkilerini geliştirmenin yanı sıra, çok kutuplu ve pluralist bir dünya düzenini destekler bir tutum içerisindedir. Benimsenen kuramsal çerçevede açısından uluslararası kurumlar tarihsel blok oluşumu açısından hayati önemde olduğundan Avrasya'nın tarihsel blok oluşumu tartışması kapsamında Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü ve Avrasya Kalkınma Bankası gibi kurumlar özellikle ele alınmış, BRICS ve Yeni Kalkınma Bankası gibi uluslararası kurumlar ise potansiyel ve mevcut işbirlikleri açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Belirtilen konu, temel alınan kuramsal çerçevede bütünsel bir yaklaşımla incelenmiş, mevcut dünya düzeni içerisinde Avrasya devletleri birbirinden bağımsız olarak değil, kurumsal ilişkileri açısından ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tarihsel blok, Avrasya, ŞİÖ, Robert Cox.

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Introduction

The main argument of this paper is that Eurasia, with its important geopolitical features, emerging economies, vast energy resources and regional institutions, has a strong potential to form a historical bloc. The predominant historical bloc within the current world order was established following the World War II by the Western bloc under the leadership of United States of America (US). However, the leadership capabilities of US has been damaged several times, and eventually in 2000's US entered in the final crisis of its hegemony. In this process of crisis, Asian states such as Russia, China and India emerged as regional powers and began to challenge the hegemonic world order and its doctrines. In this context, it may be argued that Eurasia is one of the most important elements in challenging US dominated world.

In this paper, Eurasian states is not evaluated by one by. Besides the limited extent of the paper, two of the most important reasons of this preference are the difficulty of defining and that of limiting the region of Eurasia. The other reason is related with both the content of the chosen theoretical framework and the objective of the paper. In the context of the Critical International Relations Theory, current world order is changing just as every historical structure. In this changing world order, Eurasia is considered as an emerging part of an emerging historical bloc that challenges the US dominated world order. Because of this conceptualization, Eurasia, here, refers to the group of actors, located in the region of Eurasia, and also their institutionalism as a reflection of their challenge to the current world order. These actors' institutional ties and the structure of these institutions need to be emphasized because of the role of the institutions for forming a historical bloc which may eventually evolve into a counter hegemony.

For the stated arguments above and defined aims of this paper, firstly, theoretical framework that enlightens the subject matter needs to be focused. In this part, in order to form a theoretical base for the paper, some important arguments and assumptions of the Robert Cox's Critical Theory will be explained. Secondly, main features of the current world order and its historical basis are indicated in order to make the world order within which Eurasia is located as an emerging historical bloc more understandable. In pursuit of this part, Eurasia and its potential for creating a new historical bloc will be examined. In this section, the region of Eurasia, and the historical and current meaning of Eurasia are tried to be clarified. Following that, Eurasian intra-regional institutional initiatives – particularly Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – will be evaluated. In this context, rather than focusing on the activities of these institutions, it is preferred to focus especially on the moral and intellectual assumptions of the organizations and on what these mean. Before the conclusion, potential and actual partners of Eurasia that participate in the emerging historical bloc are clarified, which is important for understanding the changing dynamics of the current world order.

Theoretical Framework

Some international relations scholars, among whom Robert Cox is in the first place, have benefited from Antonio Gramsci's arguments in their analyses of world order. Contrary to approaches which evaluate international system through the central actors of the global political economy, Robert Cox's approach, which is also called Critical Theory or Historical Materialism or Neo-Gramscian Theory, comprehends international system as a dialectical relation of opponents and it evaluates any particular historical situation as a kinesis (movement) and a process (Gill, 1993: 22-25). In this section of this paper, my endeavor is to crystalize the main assumptions and arguments of the

abovementioned approach and thus to form a frame for analyzing the position of Eurasia within the current world order.

In order to evaluate any particular historical situation as a process, some of the original concepts of Gramsci, such as hegemony, civil society, and historical bloc, war of position and war of movement, can be seen as the key concepts. Therefore, it will be appropriate to analyze these concepts as far as they are related to the subject of this paper.

Many international relations scholars, who focus on the concept of hegemony, defined this concept, via referring to the supremacy of a state over others or to its stabilizing functions (see Keohane, 1984:46; Gilpin: 1987:83; Kindleberger, 1973: 305). However, in Gramsci's view, hegemony is not simply supremacy, but most importantly an intellectual and moral leadership that primarily depends on consent and persuasion (Fontana, 2013: 272). Ideology, culture, philosophy, and organizations are genuine components of this conceptualization of hegemony (Fontana, 2013: 272). According to Cox, hegemony is a world society and a state system in which the dominant social forces of dominant states maintain their position through making the subordinate states and social forces accept the universal principles of the dominants (Cox, 1993a: 264). In this context, hegemony is not supremacy of a state over others but it consists of all dominant economic, social, political and cultural forces of the states that are in the state system (Morton, 2007: 87).

Since the intellectual and moral leadership is the main element of the hegemony, in a hegemonic order, the consent of the subordinate social groups is quite crucial (Cox, 1993a: 264). Giovanni Arrighi states that dominant group augments its power through leading subordinate groups and presenting the interests of dominant group as if they were the general interests of subordinate groups (Arrighi, 2007: 149). In this respect, dominant group legitimizes its impact through propagating its own values as common values, which means that the hegemon constitutes its legitimacy, not through solely coercion but mostly through consent (Cox, 1993b: 168-169).

Then, the important question is how a dominant social force creates consent. The answer of this question resides in the Gramsci's conceptualization of civil society. In Gramsci's thought, the concept of civil society refers to the institutions and social activities that are apart from coercive organs of government (Forgacs, 2010: 288). Civil society comprises social, political, cultural, economic groups and structures such as trade unions, political parties, schools, media, religious institutions, all of which generate the power and the legitimacy of a state (Fontana, 2010: 347).

According to the Gramscian International Relations Theory, there are three fundamental force categories all of which are in relation with each other: material capability, ideas and institutions (Cox with Sinclair, 1996: 10). In the international relations, it can be claimed that international institutions play a similar role with Gramsci's civil society for generating power and legitimacy. According to Cox, since institutions are combinations of ideas and material capabilities, they affect the development of ideas and capabilities, which eventually maintains the continuity of the stability of the order (Cox, 1986, 216). In the *Approaches to World Order*, Cox with T.A. Sinclair summarizes the functions and the functioning of international institutions in relation to hegemony. According to this, *i.* international institutions embody the rules that ease the enlargement of dominant social groups, *ii.* these institutions and rules generally are established by the initiative of the hegemon, *iii.* international institutions legitimize the norms of the existing world order, *iv.* institutions recruit the elites of the periphery through *transformismo*, *v.*

transformismo absorbs potentially counter-hegemonic thoughts and reformulates them in compatible with the hegemonic doctrine (Cox with Sinclair, 1996: 138). Thus, Cox argues that there is a strong relation between institutionalization and the hegemony in the international order (Cox, 1986, 216).

Even if the international institutions have a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of a hegemonic world order, the world order is not a static phenomenon, but rather a dynamic one, that is, it can change and has been changing for ages. Then, how a hegemonic order can be challenged? The answer can be found in the concepts of historical bloc and counter historical bloc. Gramsci states that historical bloc is the unity of nature and spirit, structure and superstructure, the unity of opposites and the unity of differentials (Gramsci, 2016:21). According to Gramsci, structures and super structures together constitute a historical bloc (Forgacs, 2010: 233). A historical bloc is a historical accord between material forces, institutions and ideologies through which hegemony of the dominant social group reaches a wide social base (Gill and Law, 1993: 93-94). Cox argues that if a similar role that is played for the enlargement of dominant social group's culture is played by subordinate group's intellectuals, it will be possible to establish a new historical bloc through creating a different culture, technic and organization (Cox, 1993b, 57). Moreover, he states that a structural transformation that may result in fundamental changes in the world order, social relations and national political orders might be possible through creation of a new historical bloc (Cox, 1993b: 56).

In the light of Gramsci's and Cox's conceptualizations, the next question needs to be answered is that how can it be possible to create a new historical bloc under the hegemony of dominant social groups? This question can be answered by appealing the concepts of "war of movement" and "war of position", which are also used by Gramsci. As methods of struggle against hegemonic social forces, "war of movement" and "war of position" are used by Gramsci for referring to different types of social orders, namely, the West and the East (Forgacs, 2010: 281). In this regard, while "war of movement" stands for a direct attack on state's political and social order via overthrowing this order; "war of position" represents a comprehensive struggle on the fields such as social, political, ideological, religious, economic and scientific fields (Fontana, 2010: 348-349). For Gramsci, while "war of movement" is an appropriate method to be appealed in the orders where civil society is weak; "war of position", in the orders where civil society strong enough to absorb revolutionary attacks (Forgacs, 2010: 281). Following Gramsci, Cox argues that a change in world order requires a war of position, through which counter-hegemony is established via creation of new institutions, intellectual resources and connections between subordinate social forces (Cox, 1993b, 52).

The Current World Order

In order to evaluate the position of Eurasia in the current world order, it is important to understand the main features of the world order and the manner that world order changes and persists. To this end, in this part of the paper I am aiming to reveal the fundamental characteristics of world order and trends of change and continuity since the World War II.

After the World War II, US became a hegemonic power (Amin, 2011: 97; Silver and Slater, 1999: 202-203; Gill and Law, 1993: 96). In that period, the main features of the hegemonic order of US can be listed as follows: *i.* formation of economy and security

structures based on US's leadership, especially in the non-communist world. *ii.* US's maintenance of global demand growth *iii.* approximation of the ideas, policies and institutions among the prominent capitalist states *iv.* supply of cheap raw materials, particularly petrol (Gill and Law, 1993: 102). Main apparatuses of US hegemony immediately after World War II are United Nations (Arrighi, 2007:152) and Bretton Woods institutions (Amin, 2011: 97), NATO and European Economic Community (Gill, 2003:58) and propagation of the cultural hegemony through cinema, music, clothing, food industry (Hobsbawm, 2008: 441).

However, by the 1970's, hegemonic position of US, internally and externally came under question by a series of events, such as Vietnam War, Yum Kippur War, collapse of gold standard, petrol crises, demands of Third World etc. (Silver and Slater, 1999: 214). Such a loss of legitimacy characterizes by Arrighi as *signal crises of hegemony* which in a reasonable period of time is settled (Arrighi, 2007: 151). According to Cox, in the context of US's hegemony crisis, 3 possibilities emerged: *i.* reconstruction of hegemony, *ii.* disintegration of world economy around the great powers, *iii.* establishment of the counter hegemony depending upon Third World (Cox, 1993b: 61). It will be appropriate to argue that the first possibility was realized by 1980s. During the government of Margaret Thatcher in United Kingdom and the presidency of Ronald Reagan in US, neoliberal policies, which are called by Cox "hiper-liberal" policies, initiated to be implemented (Cox, 1993a: 267). These neoliberal policies are imposed on subordinate states through international procedures such as Uruguay Round (Gill, 2002: 56) and Washington Consensus (Wallerstein, 2007, 57). Moreover, neoliberalism was presented as if it is for the benefit of all parties and thus helped reconstruction of hegemony in favor of capital (Cox, 1993a: 267). In this framework, neoliberalism played a hegemonic role (Gill and Law, 1993: 101).

The neoliberalization process was parallel with the globalization that was maintained by dominant classes of US, Japan and Europe (Cox, 1993b: 260). In order to understand globalization, Alexandr Dugin's dual conceptualization of globalization is useful within the chosen theoretical framework. Dugin divides the concept of globalization into two, namely, real globalization and potential globalization (Dugin, 2007:161-162). According to this, real globalization is the imposition of pro-Western political, cultural and intellectual codes to the whole world. In this process, nations loose the sovereignty or to be excommunicated. Economically, globalization insists on the application of liberal financial models and politically, pushes the Western democracy, "human rights", "open society" etc. (Dugin, 2007: 162). Within this scope, it can be argued that globalization also played a hegemonic role in the reconstruction of hegemony. According to Cox, together with the globalization process, some states have tended to form regional blocs. This tendency is dubbed by him, macro regionalization (Cox, 1993b, 263).

In 1990's, the collapse of Soviet Union and the economic and political weaknesses of subordinate states provided US with the wide opportunity of a solitary control over United Nation Security Council (UNSC) (Cox with Sinclair, 1996: 498). Moreover, Western democracy is introduced as the highest phase of the humanity and the arrival of the end of the history is announced (Fukuyama, 1992: xi-xiii), just as the clash of civilizations heralded (Huntington, 1997) by the scholars that are called by Gill "organic intellectuals of US". Additionally, disciplinary effects of neoliberalism in Third World, former communist bloc and socialist parties of the West (Gill, 2002: 50) resulted in a high popularity of US based world order (Arrighi 2007, 164) until 1997-1998 Asian

economic crisis (Cox, 2007: 522). Rise of neo-conservatives in the US and “war on terror” in the post 11 September which occurred in parallel with US’s declining popularity and downwardly economic trends (Gill, 2012: 514) throw hegemony of US into a *final crisis* (Arrighi, 2007: 209).

Potentials of Eurasia for Creating a Historical Bloc

In order to base this paper upon a reliable foundation, it is required to clarify the “region of Eurasia”. Considering the various definitions of a region, it is hard to claim that there is a conventional definition on the concept of region. For instance, Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel define regions as “subsystems”. According to them, regions are subsystems that share common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical links. Geographic proximity is an important feature of these subsystems in which togetherness strengthens in accordance with the actions and attitudes of states that are outside the region (Cantori and Spiegel: 1969: 362). Bruce Russett, on the other hand, evaluates regions in five criteria: social and cultural homogeneity, political attitude, political institutions, economic interdependence and geographic proximity (Russett, 1967: 11). Joseph Nye defines a region as a group of states that engaged with interdependence and geographical relations (Nye, 1968: vii). Besides these definitions, Gleason defines a region in association with the Benedict Anderson’s concept of nation as “imagined community.” According to him, a region may be defined as “spaces as where – at a minimum – people recognize each other in some orderly fashion, or understand the world similarly – where some events have a common resonance.” Thus regions are formed in people’s minds by the flow of history in the material world (Gleason, 2009: 26).

Given the Gramscian approaches’ historical structure analyses in which material, institutional and intellectual force categories are relational (Cox with Sinclair, 1996:10), Eurasia may be defined as a combination of material, intellectual and intellectual elements.

Throughout the history, Eurasia has been one of the most outstanding regions in the whole world. More recently, in the beginning of the 20th century especially S.H. Mackinder, who is one of the most known classical geopolitics expert, stated the importance of Eurasia. According to him, “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the heartland commands the World-island; who rules the World-island commands the World (Mackinder, 1962: 261). As a “pivotal area” Heartland, according to Mackinder was Eurasia. In the current world order, depending on Mackinder’s description, Eurasia consists of Russia, Caspian basin and ex-Soviet Union republics of Central Asia namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (Alcenat and Scott, 2008:2). Because of this vital position of Eurasia, political struggle over the territory of Eurasia was named as “The Great Game”. The concept of the Great Game was used to describe “the struggle for political dominance, control and security..., between the Russian and British Empires” (Edwards, 2003:84).

Eurasia has a geographically vital position in the world, because the region historically and currently has been establishing economic and commercial connections between Europe and Pacific on the one hand, and between Asia and Europe on the other (Ari, 2010:13). The region is highly rich in terms of petrol, natural gas, uranium and gold (Starr, 1996: 80). According to the 2016 data, Russia and Central Asian states have approximately %30 of world’s proved natural gas reserves and approximately %9 of world’s proved oil reserves. Additionally, Middle East that has the world largest oil

reserves is the neighbor of the Eurasia (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2016: 6, 20).

Together with this material structure of Eurasia, various regional and global elements lead to the augmentation of the importance of the region. First element that increases the importance of the region is not directly related with the subject of this paper: regional actors that have cultural similarities and historical relations with ex-Soviet Union states aimed to widen their sphere of influence through vitalization of cultural and historical ties. Secondly, US that is in the crisis of hegemony, aimed to benefit from the power vacuum in the region. In this respect, new dependent states of Eurasia were seen as the instruments of the reconstruction of US's hegemony. Indeed, right after the declaration of independence of the former Soviet Union states, US aimed to protect the interests of US companies. Additionally, US started to make economic aids to the newly independent states to maintain secure inflow of US capital through forming necessary economic and institutional infrastructure (Arı and Pirinççi, 2010: 296,303). In the meantime, military relations started to be established between former Soviet Union States and US, including military training, partnership with NATO via "Partnership for Peace". Together with the Afghanistan operations of NATO, this military relations intensified, US used military bases especially in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan for these operations (Arı and Pirinççi 2010: 302; Nichol, 2003: 13).

US obviously supported east-west energy corridor projects, technically and financially sponsored international oil and gas pipeline projects that will bypass Russia (Efegil, 2010:47). Additionally, US made an effort for controlling Russia's increasing power and for limiting the impact of Iran in the region and for enduring the integration of the market of the region with the global market (Atal, 2003). These attempts of US would gradually damage established links among the states of region and create disconnection between them which may escalate the economic, social, political problems in the region. Moreover, at the beginning of 2000's, in some of the former Soviet Union Republics, colored revolutions occurred i.e., Georgia (2003), Ukraine 2004, Kyrgyzstan (2005) (Lane, 2009, 113). Even there are some differences regarding the contents, all of them had moral and financial support from the West that aim to undermine established governments. (Lane, 2009:114-115). This process indicated the West's attempt to promote "internal change through manipulation of the norms and values" such as democracy, freedom, justice (Lane, 2009: 115). This normative emphasis behind those "revolutions" is directly related with the hegemonic doctrine of the post-Cold World War order. Then, it can be simply argued that the West tried to co-opt new independent states for making them a part of hegemonic order of the West. Then, it is obvious that US, through economic, social, and political means, tried to make her influence spread over ex-Soviet domain. However, it can be argued that such an involvement of US in Eurasia damaged US interests in the region. For instance, in 2005 Uzbekistan left GUAM Organization of Democracy and Economic Development which is pro-US and anti-Russian, rejoined Collective Security Treaty Organization (Arı and Pirinççi 2010:307). More recently, US lost her last military base (Manas Military Base) in the region.

Thirdly, states that became gradually stronger (such as Russia and China) parallel with the relative power loss of US aimed to protect their established relations with the region and/or developed new relations with them in order both to increase their power and to diminish the impact of US in the region. For instance, China aimed to balance the power of US and to establish the multipolar international system through winning Eurasian

states over herself (Efegil, 2010: 48). In this context, according to Lewis, even if once Central Asian states are wary of the so called expansion of China, they “increasingly view China as an upholder of the status quo, protective both of inter-national borders and the principles of non-interference,” (Lewis, 2008: 128). Similarly, Central Asian states characterize Russia as a trustful strategic partner and perceive her as the guarantor of the peace both in the region and in the world (Efegil, 2010, 49). Moreover, besides the established economic, military, technologic ties with Soviet Union, since they are landlocked, especially Central Asian states require the pipeline system and on the transportation infrastructure that is established by the Soviet Union (Efegil, 2010:49).

The abovementioned third element is important in terms of the concept of historical bloc for many reasons. When American hegemony came under question and regionally powerful states began to increase their relative power, Russia and China renewed their relationship. One of the most important foundational pillars of this relationship is the promotion of multi-polar world order (Turner, 2009:159). It can be argued that, this process began when Russia and China established a “constructive partnership” in the mid-1990s (Turner, 2009: 162). In this context the integration of Russia and China with the newly independent states may lead to a formation of a regional-economic bloc that unifies energy suppliers and demanders and creating regional economic chains thus forms an economic short cut for the economic independence of the region. This sort of economic independences damage the established hegemony that is in crisis.

The third element is also important for solving the problems of the states in the region. Even if they all have some unique problems of their own, they also have common problems. One of the most important common problems of Eurasian states is the consolidation of their institutional identities and maintenance of their independence through maximization of use of resources (Kireçci, 2011: 25). Boundary problems, ethnic problems, water problem and the risk of Islamic radicalism are some of the other problems of the Eurasia (Arı, 2010:14). As stated above, the neoliberal and globalizing trends of US led world order tends to undermine the sovereignty and independence. However, the regional problems may possibly be solved more easily through respecting sovereignty and the cooperation of the states in the region against common problems. This will result in resurgence of the states in the region which means more powerful states in the face of hegemonic order. As a result, the power vacuum in the region will be filled by the states of the region which gradually limited the maneuver capability of US as a leading actor of the established hegemony.

All of these elements generated the discussions of the “new great game”. The concept of New Great Game which acquired currency after the collapse of Soviet Union is used to describe the “competition in influence, power, hegemony and profits” in the Eurasia (Edwards, 2003: 83). The range of the New Great Game can be argued that it is more diverse than the classical Great Game concept. For instance, the new Great Game includes establishment of neo-imperialist hegemony, cultural alliances, profit maximization of non-state actors, securing contracts and dominant shares in consortia (Edwards, 2003: 89).

According to the classical geopolitics views, a great power that controls particular geography (here Eurasia), control the whole world (Gray and Sloan, 2003: 306; Spykman, 2008: xxvii). And thus, this particular geography has seen as a “key” for the rule of the world. Similarly, after the Cold War, “new great game” theoreticians viewed Eurasia as a battlefield for the power struggle. Even if all of these views have a factual ground, in this paper, it is argued that they underestimate the potential of the Eurasia.

For this reason, in this paper, Eurasia is examined neither as a “key” of a special endeavor nor just a battlefield of the power struggle. Conversely, based on Gramscian assumptions, it is examined with its own potential to be a part of a historical bloc.

As specified above, institutionalization as an international civil society in Gramscian terms has a vital role in the formation of a historical bloc. With respect to Eurasia, there is a very outstanding intra-regional institution, namely, SCO. In 1996, Shanghai Five that consists of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan established and in 2001 Uzbekistan joined to Shanghai Five and organization was renamed as SCO. Solely the member states of SCO cover approximately three fifths of the whole Eurasia and with its approximately 1.5 million population of SCO has a quarter of the whole world population (“Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, (n.d.), para. 1, *Global Security*). Besides these statistics, with its observers (India- approved to full membership, Pakistan, Belarus, Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia) and dialog partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey) SCO is a huge international organization.

As stated in the article 2 of “Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” the goals of the organization are “mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness between the member states; to encourage effective cooperation between them in the political, trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural, educational, energy, transport, environmental and other sphere. (“Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, Article 2). Even if these goals seem very usual for a regional cooperation organization, some other aims of the SCO cannot be seen that usual. According to the same article of the same declaration, SCO members are “devoting themselves jointly to preserving and safe guarding regional peace, security and stability; and establishing a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.” (The same declaration above, Article 2).

In this context, the concept of “Shanghai Spirit” required to be noted. Article 4 of the declaration focuses on the “Shanghai Spirit” that is formed during the Shanghai Five process and states that this spirit will be governing norm in the SCO. (The same declaration above, Article 4). However, Article 5 of the “Declaration of the Heads of State of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity” (2012), states that “under the guidance of the Shanghai Spirit, the SCO, as an important player and constructive force in the international relations, has become a model of state-to-state and regional cooperation in the 21st century. The member states will continue to promote peace, justice, democracy and diversity in the world and advance development and prosperity of all countries and mankind by building harmonious and friendly partnership in the region.” (“Declaration of the Heads of State of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity”, Article 5).

Additionally, in the charter of the SCO, principles of the organization are stated. In the Article 2, general principles that are directly related with the whole international relations are listed such as “mutual respect of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of States and inviolability of state borders, ... non-interference in internal affairs...” are listed. (“SCO Charter”, China Daily, 2006, June 12).

In the light of the abovementioned characteristics of SCO, some important points need to be highlighted. Firstly, the goal of “establishing a democratic, fair and rational new

international political and economic order” can be analyzed as the desire of SCO member states for changing the current world order into a more just one. Secondly, while in 2001, when SCO first established, “Shanghai Spirit” was seen as a governing norm of the organization itself; by 2012, “Shanghai Spirit” was introduced as a model of interstate relations in the struggle for peace, justice, democracy and diversity in the world. This shift that is concretized in the concept of “Shanghai Spirit” can be analyzed as a shift in the perception of power to change the world. Representation of the Shanghai Spirit which originally is the basis for the principles in managing the relations of member states (Weiqing Song, 2016) as a model that guides interstate relations can also be seen as a claim of leadership which is very crucial for formation of a historical bloc. Lastly, it will be appropriate to take a closer look to the principles that are specified in the Charter of the SCO. Focus on the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-interference to internal affairs, clearly reflects the uneasiness about the threats posed to the internal and external sovereignty.

Shanghai Spirit is sometimes critically evaluated. According to Thomas Ambrosio, for instance, “Shanghai Spirit” “is openly promoted as universally applicable and as a basis for global politics constituted in opposition to what its members see as an American dominated, power-based international system.” (Ambrosio, 2009: 162). Even if the author sees SCO’s this tendency as an unfavorable stance, this stance represents a high potential to create a historical bloc which eventually may transform into the counter hegemony. Similarly, Ambrosio criticizes the SCO’s focus on sovereignty rather than democracy and interprets SCO’s principles as authoritarianism (Ambrosio, 2009: 162-165). However, one should keep in mind that, articles 2 and 78 of the Charter of United Nations states that the UN is based on and respect to the principle of sovereign equality, article 4 emphasizes both the importance of territorial integrity and political independence. Moreover, there is no single sentence that contains the word “democracy” in the Charter (“Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice”).

For Cox, restructuring of a political sphere requires a formation of a historical bloc that is able to pursue a long war of position (Cox, 1993a: 272). This war of position is a process which occurs in the given order and in order to create alternatives for the institutions and intellectual resources of the order and also to form connections between subordinates of the order (Cox, 1993b: 52). It is obvious that SCO has the claim for being a part of a construction of a new world order when the abovementioned characteristics of the organization take into consideration. Moreover, “Shanghai Spirit” and principles of the SCO draw a frame for the whole states in the world.

SCO is not the only promising organization for the improvement of the Eurasia as a historical bloc. History of Eurasian integration dates back 1991. On 8th December 1991 Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other former Soviet Union States joined CIS on 21st December 1991. In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus signed the Treaty on Increased Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields. (“Eurasian Economic Integration Facts and Figures”, 2013: 6) Eurasia Economic Union (EAEU) is another important organization that is worth mentioning. EAEU has its origins in 1994 when Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, voiced the idea of “Eurasian Union of States”. In 1995, Treaty of Customs Union (CU) was signed between Belarus, Russia, and Kazakhstan. In 1999, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed Treaty of Customs Union and Single Economic Space (SES). One year later, these 5 states established

Eurasian Economic Community and eventually in 2014 EAEU established (“Timeline”, (n.d.) Eurasian Economic Union, Official Web Page). In the Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union, there are some important remarks to be focused on. According to this document, EAEU is guided by “the principle of the sovereign equality of the states, the need for unconditional respect for the rule of the constitutional rights and freedoms of man and national...” Moreover, this document states the importance of “respecting (member states’) history, culture, and tradition”, which means the principle of non-intervention to the internal affairs is important for the EAEU. Lastly, EAEU declaration document highlighted that the “further development of Eurasian economic integration shall serve the national interests of the Parties” (Treaty On The Eurasian Economic Union: 1).

Starting from 1970’s, financialization has been one of the most important tendencies of the world order. According to Amin, states that are in the core of the world system have the financial control over the global capital (Amin, 2000:4-5). Regarding this, it is possible to make an inference that there are in competition over the control of world finance. In this respect, Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) should also be emphasized. EDB was established in 2006 by Kazakhstan and Russia. Besides these two states, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are now the members of the Bank. Main goals of the Bank can be listed as follows: to encourage sustainable economic development of member states, to promote integration between member states to mitigate the consequences of the global financial crises (“About”, (n.d.), Eurasian Development Bank, Official Web Page). The Bank also aims to strengthen the CU and SES (“Mission”, (n.d.), Eurasian Development Bank, Official Web Page).

Eurasian Development Bank becomes prominent, when compared to international financial institutions such as World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Boratav states that programs of WB and IMF have never been developmental and expansionist but always anti-inflationist for more than 30 years, which means that these institutions are motivated to transfer funds to the international finance capital and guard the elites of the periphery states (Boratav, 2015: 171-2). In this context, it is possible to argue that international financial organizations serve for the benefit of the dominant actors of the current world order and that they are strong tools for the infiltration of the neoliberal principles to the subordinate states and that they are also effective instruments for the *transformismo*. Thus, Eurasian Development Bank is important for it reduces the dependence of Eurasian state to the hegemonic international financial institutions.

Potential and Actual Partners of Eurasia

When we focus on the dynamism in the Eurasia and on the “Shanghai Spirit”, it can be argued that there are some important actors that share common desires with Eurasia. Among these actors, BRICS can be mentioned in the first place. In 2003 Brazil, Russia, India, and China established BRIC and in 2011 South Africa joined them, hence the organization is called BRICS. Russia and China are the two common members of BRICS and SCO. As stated in the Sanya Declaration of BRICS Leaders Meeting, BRICS aims at contributing to creation of a more just world and to development of humanity (Sanya Declaration, Article 3). According to this Declaration, UN System should be reformed and should be more representative (Sanya Declaration, Article 8); sovereignty, territorial integrity and independency must be respected (Sanya Declaration, Article 9). These articles, besides reflecting a strong aspiration to be a part

or leader of a new world order, are also in the same direction with the SCO's desires and principles. Moreover, BRICS, similarly with the Eurasian states, in 2014 established their own development bank called "New Development Bank" (NDB). According to the Article 1 of the Agreement on the New Development Bank, purpose of the Bank is not only to fund BRICS but also to mobilize resources for other emerging economies and developing countries ("Agreement", (n.d.), New Development Bank, Official Web Page). EDB when thought together with NDB, it can be argued that alternatives of hegemonic international financial institutions are challenged by actors that desire a new and fair world order.

The other important organization that should be mentioned is geographically very far from Eurasia, and yet it is close in principle. "Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America" (ALBA) which defines itself as an "integration platform" for Latin America and Caribbean, consists of Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Ecuador, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada and the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. ALBA's position can be characterized as anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal. ALBA opposes all kinds of US interventions in the Latin America and impositions of neoliberal policies to the subordinate states through IMF and WB. SUCRE is also worth mentioning in this respect. SUCRE is the currency of ALBA that is used for regional trades as a medium of exchange for diminishing effects of dollar and of international financial institutions ("About", (n.d.), *Albainfo.org*). Even if ALBA seems like a more pro-socialist and anti-imperialist organization, its uneasiness about a hegemonic world order may constitute a common ground for Eurasia as a spirit of alliance.

The project of Asian Century is another important phenomenon with regards to potential and actual partners of Eurasia. By the very beginning of the 21st century, shift of the economic center of the world from West to East began to be discussed (Arrighi, 2007) Asian Century project can be seen related with these economic facts. Even if it seems similar to the "New American Century Project" because of its name, it is different in its content. "New American Century Project" is a neo-conservative based think-tank that claims 21st century will be the American century and developed aggressive strategies for the world hegemony of US (see, "Rebuilding American Defenses: Strategy Forces and Resources for a New Century", A Report of the Project of the New American Century, September 2000: 1-5). The idea of Asian Century which is based on the past centrality of the economies of Asia, assumes that if Asia maintains its economic success for another 40 years, by 2050 Asia will be in the position of Europe's today ("Asia 2050, Realizing the Asian Century Executive Summary", (n.d.): 5). According to the Project, economic engines of the Asia are China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Malaysia. However, the Project depends on a three level agenda: national, regional and global. In the regional level, regional cooperation, even regional integration is considered as important. In the global level which makes sense with regard to creation of a new historical bloc, project states that Asia needs to be transformed from a passive position to be an active player, debater, and constructive rule maker in the global politics. Project concludes that "The Asian Century should not be Asia's alone but the century of shared prosperity." ("Asia 2050, Realizing the Asian Century Executive Summary", (n.d.): 8-9).

In the context of the subject of this paper, The Asian Century Project has important for two reasons. The first one is that this project has a strong claim of the leadership gradually in the region and in the globe. As mentioned before, leadership is one of the

two important aspects of hegemony. However, this hegemonic claim is not similar with the projections of “New American Century Project” which especially during 2000’s, is aggressive in its content and therefore focuses on the coercion rather than consent. The statements “leadership”, “constructive rule maker” and “shared prosperity” on the other hand, may be seen as expression of leadership desire based on consent creation process which means hegemony in a Gramscian sense. The second one is that, as it is obvious from its title, The Asian Century Project focuses on the Asia region where Eurasia is an important part of it. Thus, the countries who want a more powerful and autonomous Asia may be seen as the potential partners of the Eurasia region in its desires to form a more fair and just, democratic multipolar world order.

When actual and potential partners of Eurasia considered, it is possible to argue that there is a tendency in the world for challenging the hegemonic, unipolar, US-led world order. This probably means that an historical bloc has already begun to emerge against US-led hegemonic world order. According to Gramscian assumption of historical bloc, a counter-historical bloc that may challenge the hegemonic order is formed in this hegemonic order and generates alternative intellectual, material and institutional sources (Cox, 1993b: 53). Keeping this assumption in mind that the institutions of SCO, BRICS, EDB, NDB, ALBA can be evaluated as the institutional bases of an emerging historical bloc for they refuse the established world orders’ impositions and put forward an alternative idea about the structure of the inter-state relations. Then, BRICS and ALBA states are the potential partners of Eurasian states some of which are actually partners.

Conclusion

In this paper, depending on the Robert Cox’s Critical International Relations Theory, it is argued that Eurasia has a strong potential to form and/or to be a part of an emerging historical bloc that may challenge US-led established order. In the first section of the paper which focuses on the Critical (Gramscian) Theory, some important arguments and assumptions of the theory are examined. Later, in order to understand the position of Eurasia within the current world order, main characteristics of current world order are evaluated. In the context of the Theory, it is concluded that, in the 2000’s, leadership capabilities of US was damaged which means that the US-led hegemonic order went through a final crises. Along with this fact, regionally autonomous states tended to create macro-regions in order to resist the neoliberal dogmas of US-led hegemonic order.

Since the clarification of the region of Eurasia is important in order to ground the paper upon strong foundation, the region of Eurasia and historical associations of the region are examined. After giving some definitions of region and historical contexts about Eurasia, Eurasia is considered as an emerging part of an emerging historical bloc that challenges the US dominated world order. Then, I have focused on the Eurasia not as a tool but as a region that taking initiatives with regard to world order. Since, according to the Gramscian approach, international institutions function as civil societies especially intra and inter regional institutional initiatives are analyzed. Then, it is concluded that Eurasian institutions has the claim for being a part of a construction of a new world order when characteristics, principles and normative foundations of the organizations take into consideration. Furthermore, especially “Shanghai Spirit” and principles of the SCO draw a frame for the rest of the world. In the context of the Theory, this vision of leadership is particularly found crucial in order to form a historical bloc. Moreover, it is

concluded that Eurasian Development Bank is important for it reduces the dependence of Eurasian state to the hegemonic international financial institutions.

Lastly, the potential and actual partners of Eurasian bloc are examined. In this frame, BRICS, NDB, ALBA, and Asian Century Project are analyzed and it is concluded that since they refuse the impositions of US led world order and try to create an alternative intellectual, material and institutional base for the inter-state relations, these organizations constitute the institutional base of an emerging historical bloc. For this reason, they are or will be the partners of Eurasia.

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