



Blood Rites Theory: Is it an Alternative to Hegemonic War Theories?

Kan Ayinleri Teorisi: Hegemonik Savaş Teorilerine Bir Alternatif mi?

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Özet

Ehrenreich analizinde, özellikle avdan avcılığa geçişe odaklanarak, insanlık tarihinde savaş olgusunun kökenlerini inceliyor. Tarih öncesi sosyo-politik gelişmelerin izini sürerek, gruplardan kabilelere, şefliklerden devletlere uzanan toplumsal dönüşümleri ve bu değişimlerin savaşın ortaya çıkışı üzerindeki etkilerini tartışıyor. Ehrenreich, savaşın özellikle sembollerin ve "kan ritüellerinin" kullanımı yoluyla bir erkek etkinliği olarak ortaya çıktığını ileri sürmektedir. Bu bakış açısı inşacı ve feminist bir çerçevede toplumsal bir teleoloji olarak değerlendirilebilirse de, hegemonik savaşların nedenlerini açıklamakta yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu makale, hegemonik savaş teorilerinin modern savaşların nedenlerini incelerken daha güçlü bir açıklama sunduğunu savunmaktadır. Metodolojik eksiklikleri ortaya koymak için Ehrenreich'in savaşın kökenlerine ilişkin görüşleri incelenecek ve ardından Uluslararası İlişkiler teorilerinin hegemonik savaşların kökenlerine ilişkin diğer "egzotik" açıklamalardan daha yeterli bir çerçeve sunduğu vurgulanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri, Hegemonik Savaş Teorileri (HST), Kan Ayinleri Teorisi*

Abstract

In her analysis, Ehrenreich examines the origins of the phenomenon of war in human history, with a particular focus on the transition from hunting to hunting. By tracing prehistoric socio-political developments, she discusses the social transformations from groups to tribes, from chiefdoms to states, and the effects of these changes on the emergence of war. Ehrenreich posits that war emerged as a male activity, particularly through the use of symbols and "blood rituals." While this perspective can be considered a social teleology within a constructionist and feminist framework, it is insufficient to explain the causes of hegemonic wars. This article argues that hegemonic war theories offer a more powerful explanation when examining the causes of modern wars. It will examine Ehrenreich's views on the origins of war in order to expose methodological shortcomings and then emphasize that IR theories offer a more adequate framework than other "exotic" explanations for the origins of hegemonic wars.

Key Words: *IR Theories, Hegemonic War Theories (HWT), Blood Rites Theory*

INTRODUCTION

Ehrenreich referred to Hegel that a predatory state is the anthropomorphization of a predatory beast that survives on the blood of human beings¹. Throughout post Westphalian-era, European nation-states start to conceptualize their enemies as savage creatures. Similarly, they developed a set of symbols which are used to represent the power and aggressiveness of the nation-state usually expressed throughout flags, name of weapons, coat of arms, names of military operations, and nicknames of commandos. For instance, the majority of U.S. jet fighters are labeled after predatory creatures. The series of military aircrafts developed by the U.S. military industries are usually named after flying creatures known for their threat in nature: F-4 Phantom, F-16 Falcon, F-14 Tomcat, F-15 Eagle, F-18 Hornet, F-22 Raptor, and so on.

In Nazi Germany, Hitler was obsessed in using totem wolf as a symbol. In fact, he was considering himself as the reincarnation of a wolf into a human-being.² Most of the coats of arms, even of the weakest states on earth make extensive use of carnivore and scavenger beasts ranging from falcons, lions, bulls, foxes, to an array of mythical animals. Likewise, some of these “meaningful” signs might include an arsenal of non-material signs that designate the religion of the state such as Islam’s crescent moon, Christendom’s cross, or David’s star. Historically, signs of political ideologies might also be included to celebrate the identity of the state. For instance, it was inconceivable to find the flag of a communist state without red color: which usually refers to the revolution of the proletariat and the blood that was shed for it. The act of naming is not arbitrary; it is meant to express a reservoir of meaning to the ones who are not part of the bordered entity.

However, symbols should not be stretched out of their sphere of meaning. Overstating symbols and signs can be misleading to understand the complexities and enigmas behind hegemonic wars. I shall use the concept of hegemonic wars instead of predatory wars because I believe that it is a distracting activity (hasty generalization) to link the causes that lead the human being to be eager for blood to the same causes that lead the hegemonic state to attack other nation-states. We shall discover that it is inaccurate to overstate only an early, and often obscure, history as well as biology to understand IR, notwithstanding their importance. Those who claim that it is the biological stab that cause nation state to be “predatory” suffers from methodological issues because they are linking what they claim as the human nature (agency) to the behavior of the state (structure). If the question is about the human nature as such, then it implies that all nation-states should be predatory in nature including states such as Switzerland, New Zealand, or Brunei. In this paper, I shall argue that what is claimed to be the predatory nature of the human being is not relevant when tackling a much more complex phenomenon: the causes of hegemonic wars. In other words, the hegemonic state is the result of a long process of development wherein individuals are indoctrinated towards certain ideologies which result in defining the foes from the friends and materialism remains the cornerstone of motives. But before, I shall review the work done by Ehrenreich on the origins of “predatory” wars.

¹ Barbara Ehrenreich. *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of war*, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 212.

² Robert G. L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*. Da Capo Press, 1993, Please see Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

EHRENREICH THEORY AND ITS CRITIC

Ehrenreich links the origins of war to early processes of interaction with nature that pushed humans switch from prey to predatory stance³. Through socialization, humans developed notions of courage and nobility in sacrifice for their communities. This men's business, according to Ehrenreich, developed from physical vulnerability compared to more lethal species and beasts. She claims that early fear or instinct created the need of setting up common defense which can be traced to some predisposed biological traits notably intelligence and language. Concepts of human sacrifice, heroism, victory and glory were also considered to be reasons why humans and more specifically men, as opposed to women, wage wars. Ehrenreich digs into the developments of sociopolitical organizations (from bands to nation states) and the role technological advance, religion (and some forms of nationalisms) have influenced the way "blood rites" are conducted, concluding that reasons remain the same although taking other forms and shapes assessed as being more lethal and more democratized way to a level where humanity itself might becoming prey. Ehrenreich militant-ism is expressed through a last call for promoting anti-war ideology, that Bernstein (1998) used against her initial hypothesis on human nature arguing that, in fact, not all humans are creatures in constant thirst for blood shedding⁴.

Intertwining biology and social anthropology was very interesting in the work of Ehrenreich and can be considered original in the sense that most war theories that approach the origins of war are mainly linked to classical IR theories and their derivatives. However, originality should not overcome the relevance of classical theories on the origins of warfare, notably theories on Hegemonic warfare that capture well the factors behind occurrence of wars especially at systemic levels. While Ehrenreich attempt is to wary a fundamental Clausewitzian notion that "war is conducting politics by other means" using an alien methodology overstressing biological determinism aiming by all means to dissociate war from its pure material substance, suggesting that it is rather an innate character in men developed throughout primitive stages of humanity resembling to some extent the fatalism in the "zombies" apocalypse.

Tracing back the origins of warfare to human's (or men's) biology downgrades the role of structures and systemic realms men operates from within. Why humans (or states) wage war? In answering this fundamental question, one cannot link a deadly and risky phenomenon on a some prehistorical influences of set of symbols and early bloody rituals traced back to first encounters humans might had with scavengers to back some kind of exotic vampirism. While different sociopolitical organizations have developed extensive ceremonials to glorify and honor the act of war, one should not be misled by subjectivities accompanying the notion of warfare as any other social phenomenon. Thus, what is described as symptoms or processes should not be interpreted as causes. Humans fight for material goals, and immaterialities are only ways to valor "sacrifice" for the living and to "sweeten" fate of eventual death during combat.

Historically, humans engage in combat to guarantee survival foremost and optionally for prosperity, and even when they fight for a cause and bitterly "accepting" sacrifice, most do so to naturally protect their communities and kinships from danger but some, shall they die in combat,

³ Ehrenreich. *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of war*, 292.

⁴ Alvin H. Bernstein. *SAIS Review* (1989-2003) 18, no. 1 (1998): 192. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45345772>

might have believes or at least assurances, that they are going to be reincarnated or even be immortalized in a second life (martyrdom). Thus, engaging in war is not to satisfy a pre-installed genetic or socialized need for bloody fanfares, but it is an activity to primary fulfills a pure material necessity even in post-life universe, knowing that even the immaterial needs are somehow indirectly linked to materialism. If soldiers fight for honor and glory, then these immaterial concepts can only back an ultimate goal: controlling territory, gold, and slaves and other spoils of war. It is not about the status humans fight for, but they primary engage in wars for what this status will offer in terms of privileges. The concepts that usually surround warfare such as ideological and religious dogmas are psychological preludes to eventually make the soldier or the warrior accept and digest the fate of sacrifice knowing that there will be in exchange some kind of redemption at other stages, if courage and bravery shall be demonstrated. While secular chauvinism does not necessarily offer the afterlife option, fear and pressure were the alternative. In times of wars, one can imagine the consequences of refusing conscription, or formal designation to execute a kamikaze operation in Japanese army during WWII. But why humans have set norms to regulate war?

One should not neglect that war by now has a law prescribing what an army is not allowed to do in a war theatre. For example, the use of WMD and the extermination of civilians, or even mistreating prisoners of war are criminalized by international laws. Moreover, there has being incremental antiwar social movements around the world challenging governments to stop military operations during which waves of human protestors around the world have expressed in streets disagreements on wars. These orders, divine or human made, regulate blood shedding and this is not what Ehrenreich presumes throughout her essay. It is noteworthy to know that these norms and principles to “humanize” warfare and regulating the act of war by not only setting preconditions to violence, but also putting rules on how different subjects should be dealt with during and after combat. For example, In Islam, the act of Jihad (Holy War) is preconditioned primary for self-defense in cases of siege, or invasion of Dar-Al-Islam (Muslims’ Territories) a non-Muslim force. In the process, Islamic jurisdiction prohibits the killing of noncombatants, and even restricts damaging properties and bans torture of prisoners. These rules can similarly be found in different religious and legal texts throughout history; and therefore, this would go naturally against Ehrenreich’s assumption that humans (and men) are merely predators biologically pre-programmed to kill their preys.

Thus, the relevance of orthodoxy (IR theories) in tackling material/immaterial side of warfare cannot be replaced by a tumultuous approach deriving from a discipline far away from the subject matter. It is worth mentioning though that even when the Fuhrer decided to exterminate Jews and other minorities, he done so with a specific paramilitary force he created independently from the Wehrmacht. But for what reason? Hitler might have assigned the dirty work to a special force, namely, the SS squads, created by his lieutenant Himmler who designed a combination of ultra-indoctrination learnings reinforced with doses of amphetamines so an SS soldier can endure brutalities of committed crimes persuaded that performing brutal and non-human orders can be psychologically damaging. Thus, protecting the moral of the Wehrmacht (regulars) is a clear assertion that the thirst of blood is not biological, and if it is occasionally nurtured in some extreme cases of human history, it’s because an embedded 19th century thought suggested superiority of the white race and that the mission of purifying it from “inferior” races is a prerequisite to progress that all states was competing for.

THE STATE AND THE SYSTEMIC INCENTIVES: WHY ORTHODOXY IS RELEVANT?

The nation state becomes hegemonic when its leadership feels the need to sustain the insofar successful regime of development by satisfying material needs such as the access to natural resources. To do so, I claim that the hegemonic nation-state attacks other nation states for a set of reasons that I classify as either material, immaterial, or both. The material incentives comprise all aspects that have to deal with promoting political and economic ends of the state. Trade, access to markets, extracting natural resources, or controlling some strategic geographic spots are some of the push factors that contribute to the launch of military campaigns against other nation-state. The immaterial push factors comprise all the aspects that have to deal with satisfying needs other than the material ones, but I claim that immaterial or subjective reasons are only constructs for materialism. Despite disagreements in classical IR theories, some social constructivists have been able to catch these motivations that govern the way IR is processed: appetite, spirit, reason, and fear⁵. In this sense, some social constructivists were able to reach certain level of compatibility with Neorealists.

It is important to note that a Hegemon can easily become victim as shown by historical evidence. Using Ehreinreich terminology, a “predatory” state can become “prey”. But what do we mean by hegemonic state? A hegemonic state is the one which has the ability to impose its will on other states for material and immaterial ends. It is important to know that the material and immaterial spheres are closely related. For example, ideology might serve as a motivation towards defining national interest as primarily economic. The dynamism of IR throughout human history requires scholars to mobilize more effort to (re) consider, theorize, and update such field constantly to protect the field from impurities. My argument consists of (re)explaining the systemic and sub-systemic factors that render some nation-states to behave in a hegemonic fashion.

Economic Theories

There are many domestic incentives that push a nation-state to be hegemonic; these push factors shall be broadly analyzed in the systemic analysis section below. There is an array of theories that extend its scope beyond the immediate needs of the dominant superpower to tackle how the different dynamics of power shape the interaction and the outcomes for hegemonic war to occur. Economic theories were extensively used to explain wars at the grand scale. Economy has been throughout history one of the most prominent catalysts for hegemonic wars to occur especially economic variables that define the general performance, such as production level, investment, trade, wealth distribution, and employment rates. One possible way to explore is overproduction⁶. An extensive investment in military equipment renders the hegemonic state more likely to launch a grand scale military attack. How? A cycle of massive (re) investment in military industries and reconstruction after systemic wars is one explanation. Therefore, the shift of capital from massive military buildup to reconstruction after the war swings constantly. War is seen as prerequisite for

⁵ Richard Ned Lebow. *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (New Hampshire: Dartmouth College, 2008), 14.

⁶ Franz Kohout, “ Cyclical, Hegemonic, and Pluralistic Theories of International Relations: Some Comparative Reflections on War Causation” *International Political Science* 24 (2003), 54 – 56.

bringing fresh air to the economy of the hegemon through rebuilding the economy. High rates of unemployment can put pressure on the hegemon to solve the issue basically by preying on the wealth of other nation states. Gramscians claim that the bourgeoisie controls state's organs and manipulate institutions to control society, and this idea was projected internationally by Robert Cox who suggests that this same social class imposes its will under the form of (neo) imperialism⁷. Some Marxists have pointed out that imperialism, as the most savage form of capitalism; render the imperialist wars more likely to happen. The 19th century Russian economist Kondratieff claim that such wars are likely to occur when competition between a traditional hegemon and new rising economic powers become intense when economies become emerging causing demand on primary commodities to substantially increase and access to markets less profitable than before. In other words, Hegemonic wars are the result of a shift in the economic distribution among nation states caused by a shift of the center of gravity of traditional economic monopolies towards others. Therefore, material incentives remain crucial in explaining the occurrence of hegemonic wars.

Long Cycle Theory

The proponents of Long Cycle Theory argue that the international system obeys to certain structure, although it might be seen anarchic. They revealed five main cycles wherein within each cycle a world power develops from systemic wars since 1500. According to Kohout;

In long cycle theory (Modelski and Thompson, 1989), each cycle is born in major warfare. Portugal emerges after the Italian and Indian Ocean Wars (1494–1516), the Dutch cycle after the Spanish-Dutch War (1580–1609), the first British cycle after the wars of Louis XIV, the second British cycle after the wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, and the American cycle after World Wars I and II⁸.

Kohout points out that the hegemon develops when it has enough firepower to defend its economic interest through monopolizing maritime trade. When other political entities want to benefit from trade as well by having access to trade, a systemic war emerges causing the rising of another hegemon, or in some cases the confirmation of its superpower character. It might sound relatively outdated in the current times since many economic activities are practiced virtually, and access to trade obeys to international law rather than realpolitik, but the argument here is that hegemonic warfare is possible when a rising power tries to counter the leading world power for economic and strategic ends. The hegemon might response brutally to such maneuvers, but it might be “preyed” as well. In both cases, we end up with hegemonic wars. Although this theory might fail to tackle the emergence of multipolarity that prevailed in different historical era such as the rise of Ottoman empire, Portugal and Netherlands during 16th century, it is particularly useful in explaining a particular typology of systemic changes when an ascending power decide to launch grand scale attack on traditional regulator.

⁷ Noam Chomsky. *Hegemony or survival: America's quest for global dominance*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 59-61.

⁸ Kohout, “ Cyclical, Hegemonic, and Pluralistic Theories of International Relations: Some Comparative Reflections on War Causation”, 55.

From Thucydides to Gilpin

Gilpin argues that Thucydides premises of Hegemonic warfares are still relevant to understand the dynamics of IR⁹. In this section, we shall see how Gilpin updated the hegemonic theory of Thucydides. Let us first explore the basic assumptions of the Athenian scholar in IR. Thucydides observed that the causes of hegemonic wars have to deal with certain unhealthy alterations within the system. Basically, some changes within the system can threaten the dominance of the hegemon and the established hierarchy. The redefinition of economic centers and the wide technological upgrades within new can cause systemic warfare more likely to happen resulting in the rise of a new world dominant power¹⁰. As summarized by Gilpin, there are three premises when reading Thucydides. First, hegemonic wars are the result of a holistic change in the power distribution that results from a differential development in economics, politics and strategic views¹¹. Second, what it is defined as an international system is the product of the aggregate relationships of actors which act according to a well preconceived definition of national interest¹². Third, Hegemonic wars result in a systemic change as a new hegemon emerges to shape the new system for another cycle of stable hierarchical system¹³. However, wars do not occur automatically the same way Thucydides preached, as far as modern hegemonic wars but it is an interesting intellectual exercise to show some relevant variables before going further. If we assume that the rise of power of one actor leads to Hegemonic wars, then we have to be familiarized with the factors linked to the development of the hegemon.

Thucydides theory exemplified in Athen's case

In this sense, what are the factors that contributed to increase of Athens' power making it able to compete for supremacy with the traditional hegemon, Sparta? There are four major factors that lead Athens to grow as a hegemon: geographic, demographic, economic, political and technological¹⁴. Athens was located in an area which does not consider an interest for other powers to conquer it. These natural push factors made Athens a peaceful city state which attracted population from all the Hellenic universe and elsewhere. The increase of population represented a challenge to the city state to feed all its population which pushes it to develop (1) an indigenous industry destined for export basically to be exchanged for food, and (2) Given the high density of population within its small and poor territory in terms of natural resources (Attica), Athens start to send expeditions in the surrounding Greek regions. In addition, technology and economy played a potent role in empowering Athens. The Greek city state has an advanced naval fleet relative to its neighbors which has promoted its commerce by protecting commercial activities conducted through maritime trade. Similarly, technological upgrades have also covered in land defenses techniques. Athens becomes an economic and military metropolis attracting alliances but also

⁹ Robert Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:4 (1988): 599. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/204816>

¹⁰ Kohout, " Cyclical, Hegemonic, and Pluralistic Theories of International Relations: Some Comparative Reflections on War Causation", 592.

¹¹ Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War", 592.

¹² Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War", 592.

¹³ Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War", 592.

¹⁴ Gilpin, "The Theory of Hegemonic War", 598.

enemies. The political factor that caused the war was the growth of Athenian power and the rigid bipolarity that resulted in the formation of two camps: Athens and Sparta. While natural factors seem to be important to explain Hegemonic wars, the dynamics between the proponents and their domestic differences and expectations lead to the outbreak of a “systemic” war that reshaped the political landscape in Hellas leading to the rise of a third party as the new hegemon: The Macedonians. It seems that Thucydides’ model repeats itself throughout history. By the same token, the environmental variables involved to reveal the details of the causalities for hegemonic war to occur have developed increasingly from the era of the Peloponnesian war to the Westphalian period, for instance.

The latter leads us to rethink the premises of Thucydides in the next section to see whether they are still explanatory or simply outdated. Why? Basically, Thucydides theory does not explain who will initiate the Hegemonic war, is it the rising power or the hegemon already in place. Second, Thucydides theory does not explain who is going to be the new hegemon? Is it one of the belligerents or a third party? Next, Thucydides fails to explain what are the types of interactions which tend to stimulate the proponents to go for a hegemonic war? While in the case of Athens in its relationship with Spartans, it was the danger that Athens posed to Spartans who relied on slavery for their agriculturally based economy after the release of a decree by the Athenians that prohibit slavery which might cause the slavery cast in Sparta to revolt.

To understand hegemonic wars in the contemporary era, one should bring into the picture other variables. For example, transportation and communication are becoming important as well in causations and consequences of hegemonic warfare. Gilpin has successfully updated Thucydides’ model by revealing new driving forces relevant in explaining hegemonic wars, in addition to the ones discussed earlier. Gilpin’s theory is cyclical and closely related to economics. How? To enjoy the status quo, the hegemon needs to invest massive number of resources. It needs to allocate more than its immediate competitors in developing and producing sophisticated weapons, develop enough logistics to project military power more easily, and help allies. Massive military spending causes the hegemon to decrease its investment-on-revenues in productive sectors which results in a constant decrease in economic development¹⁵, as a consequence. Once the hegemon loses its economic advantage, which is the backbone of its military strength, power shifts to other competitors. Moreover, by using rational choice theory, Gilpin claims that a rising power can launch a hegemonic war when a countering state sees that the opportunity cost to attack is high¹⁶. In other words, when a relatively rising state starts to see the act of balancing a hegemon more profitable than to keep status quo, hegemonic war outbreaks. Therefore, in Gilpin’s model, it is more likely that a competitor state is the one that tries to balance the traditional hegemon, thus responsible of initiating the conflict¹⁷. In this sense, Russia might have calculated that annexing a traditional satellite state that start to look westwards, namely Ukraine, was possible with Putin’s persuasion that U.S. hegemony is declining internationally coupled by other strategic assessments on the burdens a westernized Kiev will pose to Moscow.

¹⁵ Kohout, “War Causation”, 55.

¹⁶ Kohout, “War Causation”, 56.

¹⁷ Kohout, “War Causation”, 56.

ANALYSIS: REASONS OF HEGEMONIC WARS

As far as hegemonic wars are concerned, there are five main factors that can lead to them, as I shall explain. The first one is economic while the others are strategic in nature. Let us see the five major factors that compel the top decision makers in a hegemon to perceive the opportunity cost of not launching a military attack high to disregard. In this respect, there are five prerequisites for a hegemonic war to start. First, when the supreme leadership believes that there will be a net gain that can be driven out of the conquest, war is more likely to occur. The net gain is measured in terms of economic benefits. Second, other states decide to attack in order to defend their own territories. Third, some nation-states prefer to expand when their military strategists project that a surprise attack will be more rewarding than waiting a less advantageous defensive strategy. Next, intense arms race establish a situation in which one state prefer to take the first action either to not let the gap to be strengthen or to confirm superiority. The final factor is when former successful expansionist military campaigns render a state to become more aggressive and “greedy”.

To sum up, let us scrutinize a brief example of another type of hegemony which is regional. These are the types of research scholars ought to conduct to widen the scope of analyses by broadening the concept of hegemony. If we look at the case of the Arab Israeli conflict, we can see that the different phases of the Arab Israeli conflict during the 1948 and 1967 wars obey to the five hypotheses I developed. The 1948 Egyptian campaign against the new born state; namely Israel, was launched because there were convictions within the Egyptian leadership that Israel can be wiped out from the map given the imbalance of power in favor of Egypt at the time. The 1967 surprise attack against the Arabs which can clarify the other four remaining factors (strategic) which are (1) Israel, given its vulnerability in terms of geographic size and location, had to expand so that it can defend itself better, (2) Israel shall benefit from the first strike to neutralize the center of gravity of the Egyptian military infrastructures before they can be used against Tel Aviv, especially that the Mossad was able to depict earlier a future Arab military offensive, (3) given former success in military operations in 1948 and 1956 against the Arabs, Israel developed a more hegemonic foreign policy in the region, and (4) the attack can be explained by the fierce arms race that was taking place between Arab states and Israel between the time period from 1948 to 1967.

IR theories and models remain important in understanding hegemonic wars, yet its various sub-theories differ in assumptions and results, but they seem to holistically agree on the processes that lead a hegemonic war to occur: fight over power for economic and strategic ends. Transition theory and balance of power are other theoretical frameworks one can consider in this respect. Let us see now why other theoretical frameworks which are pressed to explain the unexplainable since their theoretical framework does not have enough tools to explain highly complex phenomenon, are irrelevant when dealing with hegemonic wars. As opposed to IR theories notably Realism, I shall explore the theoretical implications of realism(s) to claim later its supremacy in explaining “predatory” wars than what Ehrenreich might have preached.

It is true to proclaim that nation-states do not fight for pure economic and strategic goals. In fact, some nation-states, as history illustrates, might wage war for prestige, dominance, and respect¹⁸. However, the argument I am dealing with in this paper demonstrates that hegemonic

¹⁸ Jack Hirshleifer. “The Bioeconomic Causes of War”. *Managerial and Decision Economics* 19:7 (1998): 457.

wars does not seem to defend a cause since. Rather, hegemonic wars are waged for material ends caused by an anomaly within a stable system as a result of a (re)distribution of power. In other words, hegemonic wars are primarily linked to economic and strategic ends. Of course, state ideologies, religions, culture, and social incentives might influence the way the hegemon behave. Sometimes, hegemonic wars can be stimulated by the narcissistic character of the “top food chain”. Many scholars link WWII to the character of the Fuhrer. Basically, the immaterial reservoir serves to figure out and conceptualize the friend-foe demarcation notwithstanding the potency of power distribution. In this sense the immaterial factors might serve as push factors for causing all kinds of inter-state wars. In this sense, what Ehrenreich overstates to be the sole causes of hegemonic wars is well approached in neo-realism.

First, neorealists share the same premises about the nature of hegemony. They view power in its reality notwithstanding the relativity in counting it. The shortcoming that is attributed to most neorealists is that they view the system as a hierarchy with defined political military power while economic power as secondary. Power cannot be defined by the strength of troops a nation state has. For example, modern asymmetric warfare demonstrates the efficiency of insurgents against the power of a hegemon. If we assume that the U.S. is a hegemon, then we can exemplify the latter statement by the challenges they are facing with guerilla groups. Similarly, during the Iraq-Iran war, one can see how the underequipped Iranian combatants were able to mutilate themselves by intentionally neutralizing the Iraqi landmines so that they can create a safe passage for their compatriots to have access to the Iraqi heavy artillery. However, the latter was discussed by a realist, Morgenthau, who considers the immaterial incentives as important as well in defining power. The latter brings to us the immaterial variables in its relationship with the economic and strategic ends I discussed in this study. Therefore, realism is more flexible to embrace broader definitions of different concepts. For example, Nazism has served as an immaterial set of ideas that promoted not only the definition of “what should be done”, but also “how should it be done”. In the act of Jihad, a martyr is promised immortality in paradise accompanied with beautiful women called Houris, and that might explain the fierce character of Muslim combatants more eager to face death opposed to Tsahal soldiers who are thought through Judaism that living in Israel is already paradise, knowing that the afterlife remains obscure in the Torah that focus on life.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I claim that hegemonic wars are best explained by different branches of Hegemonic War Theories rather than alien approaches such as Ehrenreich’s theory. To do so, I proceeded by reviewing the work of Ehrenreich on the roots of “predatory” wars trying to reveal some discrepancies. At a later stage, I tried to reexamine main theories on the subject from an IR theory prospective with a brief referral to neorealism. I came to conclusion that hegemon, or the leading state, is the political entity which is able to impose its will on subordinate powers and that wars occur in case of considerable imbalances of power. Both material and immaterial variables are involved in explaining the behavior within the system. However, immaterialities provide only some kind of plea, or incentives for combatants to risk their lives for gold and silver, whether in life shall they survive or in the afterlife if they die. The systemic analysis is very crucial in explaining hegemonic wars. For example, Sparta was the hegemon. However, its conflict with a rising power, Athens, resulted in weakening their powers leading to the “hegemonization” of Macedonia. We

have seen through Thucydides and Gilpin's how domestic factors, in addition to systemic ones can lead to certain interaction within the actors. However, the dynamism of warfare should catalyze scholars to contribute more throughout the lenses of IR theories in order to understand the factors that lead the hegemon to decide when the system should be altered. Mainstream theories of IR cannot be flanked by provocative approaches such as Ehrenreich's which remains, though, an entertaining novel rather than a thorough alternative to the prevailing monopole of classical approaches.

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