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REVIEW BY BRADFORD DILLMAN

International Political Economy Program, University of Puget Sound

Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power. By John Agnew. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005. 296 pp., \$64.50 cloth (ISBN: 1-59213-152-2), \$21.95 paper (ISBN: 1-59213-153-0).

In *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power*, which is a contribution to the literatures on both globalization and US foreign policy, John Agnew offers some cogent arguments about the rise of US hegemony and its effects on other countries. He convincingly critiques international relations theorists who characterize the United States as an empire. He rejects realist readings of US foreign policy and world politics that define power only in relation to territorial statehood. According to Agnew, it is US society as much as the US government that shapes US hegemony and its effects on globalization.

Agnew outlines his main arguments in Chapters 1–3. He is adamant that the US relationship with the rest of the world is best described as “hegemony” and not “empire.” To use the term “empire”—as Andrew Bacevich (2003), Niall Ferguson (2004), and Chalmers Johnson (2003) do—is to suggest that US power is territorialized, centralized, and mostly coercive. Instead, according to Agnew, US “hegemony” is a form of social domination and persuasion that is increasingly not state sponsored or state dominated. It is rooted in soft power: the ability to reproduce US cultural norms and consumption practices throughout the world, which is an essential feature of globalization. In short, the United States has spread a paradigm of social order—the “marketplace society”—that is profoundly rooted in the US historical experience, and even such previous holdouts as India and China are now embracing it. “Marketplace society” is a set of ideas and social practices committed to mass consumption, commodification, privatization, populism, and the rhetoric of equal opportunity.

This US-shaped globalization is changing the very nature of the world’s geography of power. Rather than simply revolving around territorially based states, power in today’s world is increasingly rooted in society, transnational actors, and transnational networks. Thus, Agnew is critical of what he calls a “state-based ontology” of power (p. 38). Instead of looking at the world simply in realist terms (that is, as a set of state-based territories), he argues that a “geography of power” has arisen that revolves around international networks, trade blocs, city-regions, and cultural exchanges. By the end of the book, Agnew even posits that a “new transnational bourgeoisie” has become the “primary instrument of globalization” (p. 229).

Globalization of trade, production, and communications has produced a world in which states—even advanced industrialized democracies—have lost a great deal of autonomy. Resource-intensive activities are ceding dominance to services and technology-based manufacturing. Interdependence makes interstate war less likely. Global migration and capital flows are eroding state sovereignty. Even the notions of citizenship and stable political identity are unraveling. The “retreat of the state” is well-advanced, suggests Agnew (Chapter 3), even though he provides little empirical evidence to support this claim. Indeed, readers who are well versed in the

literature on globalization and international political economy will not find these arguments about the erosion of state power particularly novel. Agnew would have been more persuasive had he more carefully acknowledged the counterarguments of state-centric theorists like Robert Gilpin (2001) and Linda Weiss (1998).

In Chapters 4–6, Agnew attempts to place US hegemony in historical perspective, explaining how the “culture of the market” was developed in the United States and diffused—with government help—around the world in the twentieth century. He makes the important argument that, although a historical US culture of consumption has spread to the rest of the world, the historical US political model has not. The US form of government—based on constitutionalism, divided and decentralized rule, and consensualism—does not underpin globalization. Indeed, these aspects of US political culture are actually making it hard for the United States to adapt to the very globalization it has created. Thus, Agnew rejects the notion that US hegemony rests upon the projection of specific US political characteristics to other countries. Unfortunately, Chapters 4–6, which trace the emergence of the cultural norms and practices in the United States that were later projected to the global level, are unlikely to satisfy students of US history. Agnew’s historical forays are schematic. Other scholars—such as Lizabeth Cohen (2003), Michael Adas (2006), Richard Bense (2000), and Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (2004)—have examined, with much greater detail and nuance, the culture of US society since independence, the development of the US form of government, and the nature of the US political economy in the second half of the twentieth century.

If *Hegemony* has one primary weakness, it is Agnew’s analysis of historical and contemporary US culture. He argues that the United States historically developed a set of cultural norms and practices—a marketplace society—which it has projected onto the rest of the world and that underpins globalization. US hegemony is, presumably, rooted more in the US ability to project a consumption-based, economic-cultural model to the rest of the world than in its ability to project military power or a productivist model of development. Some parts of Agnew’s cultural analysis, designed to back up these arguments, tend toward essentialism and stereotyping. Agnew intimates, for example, that white populations of southern and mountain states have deeply rooted “credos of macho bravado, rentier capitalism, vigilantism, and apocalyptic Christianity” (p. 18); that the United States is “entirely devoid of cultural curiosity” (p. 19) when interacting with its dominions; that US society is “intensely religious” but “extremely hedonistic” (p. 55), such that “everything and everyone has their price” (p. 76); and that US society is fixated with the “celebration of redemption, both religious and political, through violence” (p. 133). A more careful cultural assessment would avoid generalizations without empirical evidence, account for subcultures and countercultures, and more fully acknowledge cultural change.

Agnew concludes that US hegemony is now coming back to haunt the country. Globalization no longer redounds solely to the benefit of the United States. Global nonstate actors and forces pose new challenges. The United States is increasingly subject to the negative effects of globalization: insecurity, inequality, and limited social mobility. It is losing its ability to compel international consensus. The global hegemon’s aggressive militarism and unilateralism during the last five years are, according to Agnew, signs of weakness, not strength. They reveal the loss of some geopolitical legitimacy and a retreat from “consensual compellence.” The United States’ relationship with the world economy is at an impasse. Agnew doubts that the United States will continue to be able to finance its profligacy.

Although these conclusions will likely resonate with some political scientists and geographers who are already convinced that US hegemony, legitimacy, and economic power are on the decline, social scientists who are close observers of the United States’ impact on globalization may not be persuaded by *Hegemony*’s

empirical data. Agnew's historical forays are schematic, overlooking institutional, racial, and ideological cleavages in American society that have threatened the presumptive "marketplace society." Yet, even though Agnew too easily dismisses the role of states and technology in global change and ignores evidence of US resiliency, he provides a welcome riposte to international relations theorists who focus solely on territorial power.

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