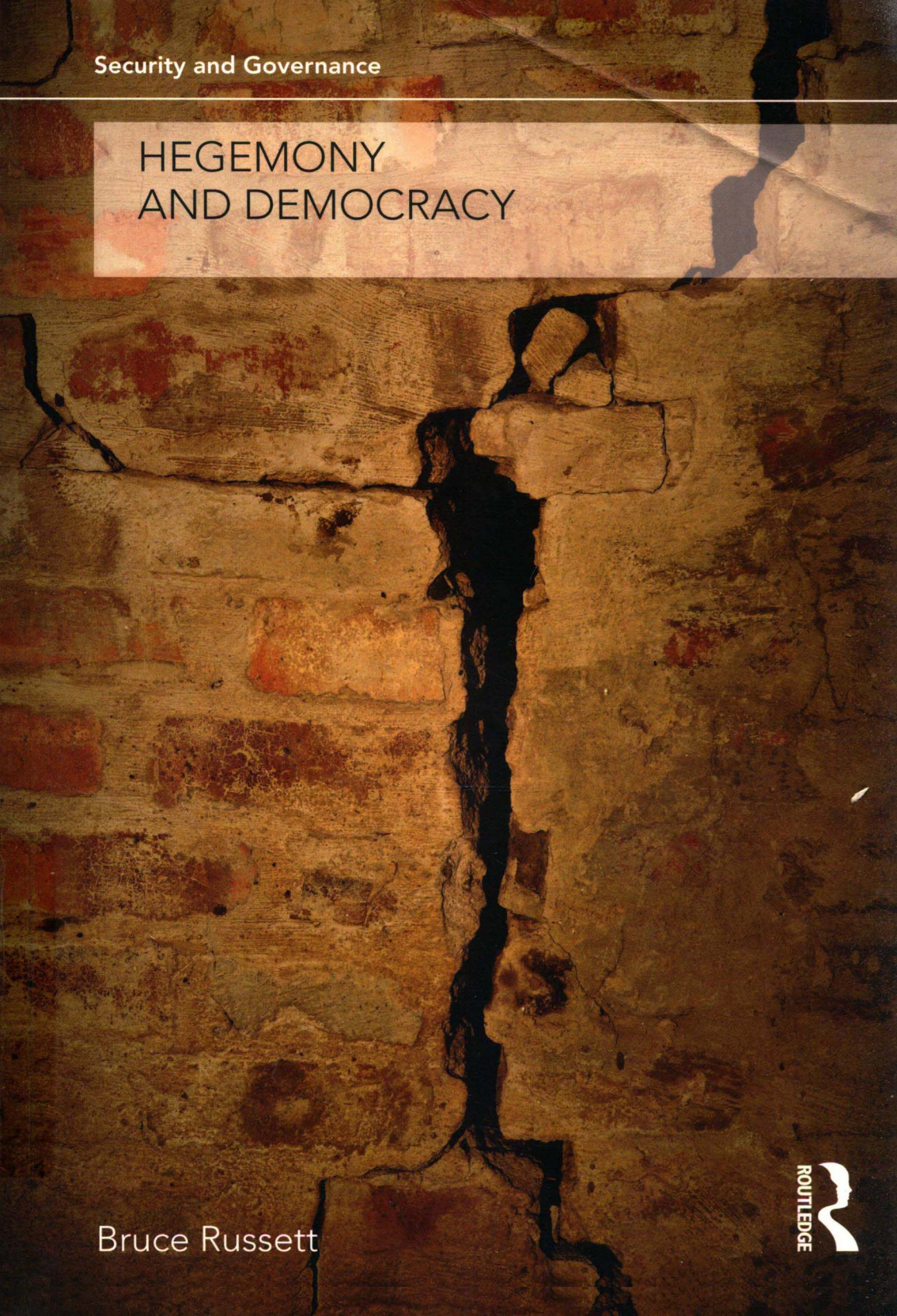
Security and Governance

HEGEMONY AND DEMOCRACY



Bruce Russett

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HEGEMONY AND DEMOCRACY

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HEGEMONY AND DEMOCRACY

Hegemony and Democracy is constructed around the question of whether hegemony is sustainable, especially when the hegemon is a democratic state. The book draws on earlier publications over Bruce Russett's long career and features new chapters that show the continuing relevance of his scholarship. In examining hegemony during and after the Cold War, it addresses:

- The importance of domestic politics in the formulation of foreign policy;
- The benefits and costs of seeking security through military power at the expense of expanding networks of shared national and transnational institutions;
- The incentives of other states to bandwagon with a strong but unthreatening hegemon and "free-ride" on benefits it may provide rather than to balance against a powerful hegemon;
- The degree to which hegemony and democracy undermine or support each other.

By applying theories of collective action and foreign policy, Russett explores the development of American hegemony and the prospects for a democratic hegemon to retain its influence during the coming decades. This collection is an essential volume for students and scholars of International Relations, American Politics, and US Foreign Policy.

Bruce Russett is Dean Acheson Professor of International Politics at Yale, and edited the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* from 1972 to 2009. His book with John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace*, won the International Studies Association prize for Best Book of the Decade. This is his twenty-seventh book.

Security and Governance Series

This series reflects the broadening conceptions of security and the growing nexus between the study of governance issues and security issues. The topics covered in the series range from issues relating to the management of terrorism and political violence, nonstate actors, transnational security threats, migration, borders, and "homeland security" to questions surrounding weak and failing states, post-conflict reconstruction, the evolution of regional and international security institutions, energy and environmental security, and the proliferation of WMD. Particular emphasis is placed on publishing theoretically informed scholarship that elucidates the governance mechanisms, actors, and processes available for managing issues in the new security environment.

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Hegemony and Democracy
Bruce Russett

Bruce Russett is one of America's leading international relations scholars, and he has long been interested in how democracy affects world politics. In this collection of his essays – some old, some new – he focuses on how America's democratic character affects its hegemony. He has no simple answer, but he provides a variety of important insights on the matter. This book deserves to be widely read.

John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor, University of Chicago

Exploring the relationships between democracy and hegemony, Bruce Russett deploys a rare combination of rigor and nuance. Filled with insights and evidence, these essays by a master at the top of his game teach us a great deal about central issues of world politics.

Robert Jervis, Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics, Columbia University

Bruce Russett, one of the most influential international relations scholars of the last half century, engages one of the most critical questions of our age – whether a democratic hegemony is sustainable. His essays are theoretically rich, historically broad, empirically rigorous, and methodologically self-conscious. They are essential reading for all serious scholars.

Jack S. Levy, Board of Governors Professor, Rutgers University

Russett is one of a handful of the most influential scholars in the field of international relations and has been for several decades. He has amassed a diverse and impressive body of research and writing, in recent years most notably his work refining and testing the theory of the democratic peace. This is a lasting body of work that students in the field will continue to read for a long time to come.

Jack L. Snyder, Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of International Relations, Columbia University

There is, has been, and will always be a certain group of people . . . who've consciously chosen their calling and do their job with love and imagination. It may include doctors, teachers, gardeners—and I could list a hundred more professions. Their work becomes one continuous adventure as long as they manage to keep discovering new challenges in it. Difficulties and setbacks never quell their curiosity. A swarm of new questions emerges from every problem they solve. Whatever inspiration is, it's born from a continuous "I don't know."

Wislawa Szymborska, Award Lecture for
Nobel Prize in Literature, 1996

FIGURES

TABLES

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CONTENTS

1

A DEMOCRATIC HEGEMON?

The age of American hegemony

Dominance is a condition never reached without effort. Achieving superiority over others requires strength, skill, determination, and luck. Even if it comes when a primary opponent collapses, it can be retained only by repeated acts of will—in sport or in the supreme contest of international politics. A hegemon may be honored, respected, feared, perhaps even loved, but its victory must be reconfirmed each day. And, like all other achievements, it will ultimately pass away.

The English word hegemony comes from the ancient Greek term *hegemonia*, meaning leadership or supremacy. The Greeks applied it to their interstate system as the exercise of predominant influence by one state over others. In contemporary discourse *hegemony* typically implies something tougher than the benign term "leadership," instead conveying a dominance in part exercised as overt or at least implicit coercion.

Those under hegemony may welcome its leadership or protection, or may chafe under it, or both. In international politics it is not too far in meaning from the more pejorative *empire*, but without that term's connotations of a formal emperor or sovereign rule over far-flung territory. As a descriptor of an international system, hegemony lies somewhere between empire and *unipolarity*, with the latter more a characterization of a distribution of power rather than behavior, in which one state greatly surpasses any other state. Unipolar dominance is typically measured by material resources, but may also be based on cultural or ideological sources of influence. Empires are usually imposed by overt force on at least some parts of the territory and population, though peace may be the outcome, as in Pax Romana or Pax Britannica. Unipolarity does not carry quite the same implication about its founding, but advocates of preserving it often justify it as promoting peace, largely because the power disparity is so big that potential challengers will be deterred from provocation.

All three terms represent an emphasis on some kind of strong hierarchy in the international system, modifying the common assumption that the international

system is anarchic ("without a ruler"). Unipolarity implies equal sovereignty with shared benefits though not equal power; empire implies no real independence and exploitation of the imperial periphery by its center (Jervis 2009: 190–191). Hegemony retains sovereignty and is noncommittal about the distribution of benefits. In this book I mostly use hegemony in the in-between sense of something less formal and perhaps less oppressive than empire, but with more emphasis on expecting cooperative behavior than the mere distribution of unipolar power may carry.

Some observers call the period from the end of the cold war (datable roughly from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) the American hegemonic age. Others more skeptically talk about a hegemonic or unipolar moment (Layne 2006). Indeed, the high point may well have been the George W. Bush administration's confident attack on Iraq in 2003, expecting that it could move immediately from the demise of Saddam Hussein's rule to a similar thrust against Iran. That never happened, as US military forces became stuck in Iraq and the Iranian target was manifestly bigger and tougher. Events showed that regime change was harder than the Bush administration believed, and it could be even harder to provide security and control politics once a regime had been changed.

Yet the United States remains by any criterion the strongest military power in the world, in 2008 accounting for about 43 percent of all global military expenditures (Perlo-Freeman *et al.* 2010: 203). The margin over any of the others is truly overwhelming: China is second, with an estimated 6.6 percent. This degree of dominance is unmatched in any period of the Westphalian state system. It is not extreme to say that, with its spending and technological superiority, the United States largely controls the global commons, meaning the sea, air, and space.[2] It has global reach in unprecedented ways, and this is accepted willingly by the American population and, with less enthusiasm, by other nations. Control of the commons, however, does not necessarily imply an ability to dominate the world's land masses, where political rule requires boots on the ground and where asymmetric warfare skills can empower quite small insurgent or terrorist groups. The global economic downturn weakened most of the large powers, though China and India lost the least. American relative strength against most rival powers has not suffered much, but its absolute strength to conduct expensive and prolonged land interventions has dropped, while many of the nonstate actors with which it contends may even have been strengthened by economic desperation in the groups they wish to recruit.

In its land-power overreach the United States bumps up against the same imperatives that hobbled previous aspirants to empire. Napoleon certainly had greater ambitions—to absorb the territory, change the domestic political institutions, or extinguish the sovereignty of rival states. So did Germany's leaders in what has been called "the thirty-year (1914–1945) war for German hegemony." The strategic threat they posed from and to the European heartland virtually compelled the emergence of "balancing" coalitions against them, despite all the problems of coordinating such large and diverse alliances. That was expected in traditional realist

balance-of-power analysis. By contrast, imperial Britain was not so threatening. As an island state offshore Europe, building a global empire dependent on sea power, it had limited ability to engage great continental land armies by itself. It was a case of a whale against an elephant, with neither able to inflict much damage on the other. Britain was at best a quasi-hegemon, maybe the biggest economic and industrial power but not in a position to dominate. As such it seemed to its European rivals less dangerous than Germany, Russia, or France were to each other. Consequently British quasi-hegemony lasted longer, and its eventual decline was due less to an emerging coalition than to the loss of its economic dynamism to Germany. The United States, not primarily a land power and without imperial claims to territory or formal sovereignty over others, can also try to be a relatively nonthreatening hegemon. Historically, great sea powers have been less likely than land powers to provoke other states into balancing against them, and their interests in promoting commerce may benefit from a liberal economic and political ideology (Levy and Thompson 2010).

For a hegemon, bilateral diplomacy may seem the easiest road to influence by providing an opportunity to do deals cheaply with weaker states. The larger and most relevant actors can often be bought off, and the rest pushed around or ignored. American hegemony, however, lacks that kind of raw dominance and commonly needs a multilateral structure of bargaining and negotiation. That requires it to rely more on international institutions that constrain itself as well as others, and on the legitimacy derived from the "soft power" of its economic, political, and social culture. Soft power is the ability to get others to do what one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment (Nye 2003). Themes of influence and persuasion are common to theories about when states may "bandwagon" with a potential or actual hegemon rather than balance against it. Even the balancing against may be "soft," with no threat or intention of using military force against the hegemon. The goal of soft balancing is to create space for the balancing states to pursue some interests that may diverge from the hegemon's, and to distance themselves from hegemonic military actions that might entangle them in conflicts for which they have neither the capability nor the will.

Balancing, whether hard or soft, is hobbled by the problems of coordinating collective action, especially by large groups. Some analysts (e.g., Posen 2006) see the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) as a soft balancer, but it is difficult to find any widespread intention to undertake military actions that would be opposed to US interests. Even if there were, ESDP can act only by unanimity, a tough feat for an organization of twenty-seven countries with no clear leader or institutional structure to coordinate policy (Howorth and Menon 2009).[3] The problem of collective action to provide public goods is well recognized in economics and political science, and it will appear frequently in this book.

Realist analysis of states' behavior has tried to establish principles for predicting when states will balance against a threat, but bandwagon with a relatively nonthreatening power. Part of the answer is that military power (the ability to control by threat or use of force) declines with the increasing costs of exercising power