

Beyond Benevolence and Coerciveness: Sharpening the Theoretical Differences between Various International Hierarchical Relations*

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Abstract

Much of the literature on international hierarchy has been careful in drawing a distinction between various types of power relations. One particular aspect of hierarchy that scholars use to distinguish between various forms of hierarchical relations concerns the extent to which coercion is used by the dominant state to produce the outcomes it desires. Although this distinction has intuitive appeal, it nevertheless is unsatisfactory when trying to typologically distinguish between possible hegemons. Describing some powerful states as ‘benevolent’ on the basis of their relatively high levels of consent risks downplaying their coercive features. Yet theoretical descriptions of coercive leaders also risk understating the levels of consent they may generate within the international system. It is, therefore, unclear whether such a widely-used metric has any utility. This paper adopts some of the insights of republican political theory to argue for another approach towards differentiating between hierarchical orders. This branch of political theory focuses on domination, status and rights, as well as the autonomy agents might have in making choices. One category of hierarchical leadership consists of states voluntarily following another states that they commonly designate to lead them, acknowledging still the possibility of coercion in such relationships. Another category, however, consists of a dominant state that invigilates over the policy choices made by other states and exercises prerogatives over their status.

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1 Introduction

Much of the literature on international hierarchy has been careful in drawing a distinction between various types of power relations. One particular aspect of hierarchy that scholars use to distinguish between various forms of hierarchical relations concerns the extent to which coercion is used by the dominant state to produce the outcomes it desires. Although this distinction has intuitive appeal, it nevertheless is unsatisfactory when assessing the character of those states that may be considered hegemons. For example, do ‘benevolent’ hegemons always use carrots and never sticks? The implication of the theoretical treatments of this issue suggests that the answer to this question is yes. But assessing the balance between coercion and consent often requires very subjective judgment calls.¹ This is ultimately because it may be difficult to tease out consent when these relations operate in the shadow of a skewed distribution of power. It may be possible to speak of a sliding scale of the amount of coercion used instead. Unfortunately, this would do little to solve the problem at hand. After all, how much coercion would a state need to exercise before it crosses the critical threshold between ‘benevolence’ and ‘coerciveness’. There is little in the extant theoretical literature that presents a satisfactory answer to this question. Perhaps there never can be one.

The purpose of this paper is thus exclusively theoretical. It is to further interrogate the contemporary literature on hierarchy, paying attention to how scholars have addressed the issue of coercion and consent as the salient features of hierarchical orders. To simply present a critique and offer little else would be unsatisfactory, however. In order to advance the debate this paper argues that a more preferable metric for evaluating different forms of hierarchy would center on a distinction between domination and coercion. To clarify and carefully distinguish between these concepts I appeal to republican political theory. By grounding a theoretical, ideal-type distinction between hierarchical arrangements on such concepts as domination and coercion, proper recognition to the salient use of threats and inducements in international politics is granted. As a result, the idealism that might abound in descriptions of consent-based international orders is avoided or at least mitigated.

This paper proceeds in the following manner. Section II describes how

¹To clarify this point, it is useful to think of the debate throughout the first decade of the 21st century over the nature of American power in the international system.

scholars have treated the issue of coercion and consent in differentiating between types of hierarchical arrangements. Section III offers an extended discussion that critically evaluates these conventional descriptions of international leadership. Section IV describes a possible corrective that takes for granted the background aspect of coercion in relationships between international political agents such as sovereign states by explicitly drawing from republican political theory. Nevertheless, as this section seeks to demonstrate, not all (possibly) coercive arrangements imply the same status that might characterize secondary agents. Section V extends the theoretical discussion to describing international orders. Section VI offers concluding remarks.

2 Benevolent and Coercive Leadership

Before diving into a discussion of how various hierarchical arrangements are differentiated typologically, it is useful to first define the very concept itself. At a prosaic level, a ‘hierarchical arrangement’ denotes a situation in which there exists (at least) one state that possesses disproportionately more resources than any other state in the international system. Having these possible instruments of power does not by itself guarantee control over the international system (Kindleberger 1973). As a result, theorists of international political hegemony (a particular type of hierarchy) emphasize how a preponderant state is able to influence political outcomes through the ‘willing’ use of those instruments. After all, as scholars point out, the term ‘hegemony’ is rooted in the original Greek ‘hagesthai’, which means ‘to lead’. Generally, this is done through international institutions that mediate the interactions of other, relatively weaker states within the international system. Institutions here can be described sparsely as ‘human devised constraints’ that may not only limit the freedom of action of states but influence the pattern of their interactions (North 1990).¹

Snidal (1985) distinguishes between what he calls ‘benevolent’ leadership and ‘coercive’ leadership to denote two different forms of hierarchical rule. The former describes a situation in which a state of preponderant resources provides all other states in the international system a set of public goods.

¹ In deference to Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of political hegemony in early twentieth century southern Europe, many treatments of the concepts refer to hegemony to denote a form of domination that uses both coercion and consent (see Cox 1983; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990). In order to make the analysis straightforward, this alleged attribute of hegemony is not discussed here until later in this paper. It is important to keep this use of the foregoing concept in mind, however.

These goods are non-rival and non-excludable. This means that the consumption of a good by one agent does not impinge on the ability of another actor to consume that good. Additionally, there are no restrictions as to who can consume it and who cannot. Original formulations of hegemonic stability theory argue that the provision of these public goods by a powerful state is a necessary condition of international stability.

Kindleberger (1973) is largely associated with theoretical elaborations of ‘benevolent leadership’. His analysis of the global economic depression during the interwar period leads him to conclude that a state must be both willing and able to provide the public goods that are necessary for economic stability. The international economic infrastructure would be fragmented and under-equipped if no sufficiently powerful state can provide a medium of exchange, sufficient liquidity, and a set of basic property rights that facilitate free trade. This is because states would fail to contribute the appropriate amount of resources that a more ‘privileged’ (and willing) member would be able to contribute (Olson 1965). Krasner (1976) offers a more structural realist account of this argument, contending that a powerful state has incentives to create and maintain an open trading environment. As the experience of the Great Depression indicates, the consequences that flow from the lack of an able hegemon for the international system are pernicious. Correspondingly, the growth of a hegemon’s power augurs well for regime stability whereas its absolute decline entails decay (Snidal 1985, 588).

Ikenberry (2001) offers a reformulation of some of the arguments put forward by Kindleberger. Forsaking short-term opportunities for exploitation, the US opted instead to craft a rules-based international order that grants voice opportunities to weaker states while also credibly committing self-restraint. Why should such a powerful state ever want to ‘tie its hands’? Political theorists since Machiavelli have recognized that rulers might embrace the rule of law to not only gain the assent of weaker actors but to also entrench the long-term institutional preferences of the ruler as the status quo (Holmes 2003). This order is ‘benign’ because the dominant state not only takes into account the preferences and interests of weaker states in its own grand strategic calculations, but also because the dominant state actively pursues strategies of self-restraint through the use of binding international institutions. Still, this liberal order supplies some of the benefits that Kindleberger (1973) describes: an open economic system that produces net gains and increasing returns for states that participate in American-led institutional arrangements.

Lake's description of international hierarchy appears to fit in with those that take a benign view of such power relations. He describes a certain class of hierarchical relations that involves contractual bargaining in which an agent allocates some amount of sovereign rights to another (more dominant) agent. Lake adopts a voluntarist definition for hierarchy according to which the dominant polity "possesses the right to make residual decisions while the other party - the subordinate member - lacks this right" (Lake 1996, 7). Hierarchy is, therefore, an exchange of goods or services between the dominant state and the subordinate state.² To win compliance of the weaker state the dominant state offers such goods as security, order, and economic stability. Thus, it may be described as 'benign' because neither agent would enter into the contractual arrangement unless it is Pareto-improving. The extent to which sovereign rights are delegated to the dominant state determines the level of hierarchy that characterizes that asymmetrical relationship (Lake 2009).

'Coercive leadership', according to Snidal (1985, 588), describes a situation in which the preponderant state compels subordinates to make contributions to the operation of the international order and its general infrastructure. Gilpin (1981) offers a succinct account of how this situation can arise. Though it may be able to provide public goods on its own, the preponderant state nevertheless possesses the ability to extract contributions towards the provision of those goods from the weaker states itself. In effect, the hegemon becomes a central authority not unlike a government insofar as it can tax weaker states to help pay for those goods. Benefits that get extracted, however, are distributed in a way that favors the preponderant state.

There are other ways of conceiving more coercive hierarchical arrangements that might exist within the international system. For example, just as Ikenberry describes some arrangements to be liberal, others can be understood as imperial. Ikenberry (2011) writes that imperial arrangements are those in which dominant states coerce subordinate states into compliance. Weak states, in other words, have no choice but to follow the dictums and commands articulated by their more powerful counterparts within arrangements that might differ in their levels of institutionalization. This contrasts quite starkly to the open and inclusive form that characterizes liberal orders. Indeed, the dominant state might deliberately design the international order

²Lake admits the possibility that his theory of hierarchy may be limited in its application, stating that this formulation of hierarchy might be inappropriate to describe Soviet relations with its satellites in Central-Eastern Europe. See Lake (2009, 159).

such that subordinate states are functionally differentiated in order to have them provide some set of goods or services to cater its own needs.

2.1 Understating Coercion and Overstating Consent

This section examines why ‘benevolent’ models of leadership might understate coercion and why ‘coercive’ models of leadership might understate consent. The problem that confronts the former is not that unassailable empirical examples of them might be hard to uncover. These are, after all, ideal-types. Rather, it is because the international environment is ultimately marked by a distribution of capabilities. Hegemons often occupy their place within the international system by virtue of the preponderance they possess in a set of material capabilities that influence their ability to coerce others. Indeed, then the identifiability of consent is difficult to disentangle from the coercion that might loom in the background (Lukes 2005). The logic of ‘malevolent’ models of hegemony confronts a set of very different problems. One concerns whether the mechanism underlying coercion, such as that which Gilpin raises, can strictly be considered coercive. Another issue that can be raised speaks to whether uses of coercive means to protect an international order may in fact command the assent of those participants that benefit from that order.³

To begin, scholars have criticized the ‘benevolent leadership’ model of hegemony for a number of reasons. Keohane (1984) asserts that ‘hegemony’ is neither an necessary or sufficient condition for international cooperation to take place. Institutions can enable states to coordinate and solve collection action problems that might otherwise make international cooperation unlikely. More relevantly for the purposes of this paper, there is widespread disagreement that hegemons would even act so benevolently vis-à-vis other states. Stein (1984) argues that an open trading system does not come automatically with the presence of a hegemon. In fact, the hegemon has to resort to asymmetric bargains to encourage other states in the international system to adopt free trade policies. After all, free trade is a prisoner’s dilemma: states would prefer to leave their economies protected while the economies of others remain open. Seeking a *multilateral* open trading system thus can entail the use of discrimination and other coercive devices on weaker states. Furthermore, Gowa (1989) also challenges the notion that hegemons would

³To be sure, the ‘benevolent leader’ might exercise coercion only insofar as it adjusts the opportunity costs facing secondary states to “their own advantage” (Keohane 1984, 252-257).

be invariably interested in free trade. As large countries can influence the world price of a good, it can impose a tariff that is large enough that it generates more revenue than the amount of consumer surplus that is lost as deadweight.

Some have extended the spirit of these critiques to assert that the case for liberal (or ‘open’) orders may be overstated. Schweller (2001) alleges that all great powers, including those characterized by liberal democratic systems, would avail for themselves their power resources in order to pursue their interests in accordance with the basic predictions of realist theory. One can point to how the US has at times displayed a lack of self-restraint during the Cold War, particularly when it was seeking to achieve foreign policy objectives in Southeast Asia and Latin America. Ultimately, the liberal order such as that which the US is said to help establish and support following the Second World War rests on a heavily skewed balance of power. Even if a liberal hegemon appears to be gaining the consent of a weaker state, there is still the matter of determining whether the weaker state’s decision was genuinely consensual given the shadow of power. It might not be able to pursue any other option but accede to the demands of the more capable state. Thus, the coercive aspects of ‘benevolent leadership’ at times risk being understated.

Yet it is unclear whether the more ‘coercive’ hierarchical arrangements in the manner described above are inherently so coercive. Terminologically, there is something oxymoronic to discuss such a thing as ‘coercive leadership’. There is a degree of voluntarism that should underlie any relationship in which one agent assumes the role of ‘leader’ and another takes the place of ‘follower’. Assent should not be compulsory in order to properly differentiate the act of following from the act of submission. This is not to say that the use of sticks should be totally absent in the relations between the ‘leader’ and the ‘follower’. Rather, the use or threat of negative inducements should not be the primary motivation that leads the ‘lesser agent’ into either participating in that form of a relationship or making a specific action that a superordinate state desires. ‘Coercive leadership’ should not imply less of the voluntarism that leadership would indicate and more of the compulsion that domination would entail.

Further, recall that Gilpin notes that dominant states can compel subordinate states into contributing towards the provision of a public good (that it could possibly provide on its own). Such a situation would be an example of ‘coercive leadership’. Nevertheless, as Snidal (1985, 587) indicates in a

footnote, the motivations for why the hegemon would exert itself towards this end are not entirely clear. That the distribution of benefits might be tilted to favor the dominant state could still be Pareto-superior. The one possibility, which Gilpin (1981, 34) does appear to embrace, is that public goods help the hegemon legitimate its preponderant power by making it acceptable to others. But then this raises a problem for Gilpin in assessing the character of a hegemonic state.

Consider the three generic reasons, according to Hurd (1999), for why states might choose to follow a rule or a commitment. Coercion is one possibility in which the state fears the punishment that might be incurred should it fail to comply.⁴ Another possibility is also consequentialist insofar as the act of submitting to the rule satisfies the state's definition of self-interest. Finally, the state might choose to obey a rule because it believes to be legitimate. The rule, in other words, ought to be obeyed. Gilpin's account of the coerced extraction of resources and the supposed production of legitimacy fits awkwardly with Hurd's description of legitimacy. In fact, the reasons that drive a state to satisfy the hegemon's demands with respect to taxation seem to be more rooted in either of the first two generic reasons for state compliance. The state might be offering its resources without much resistance for fear of the retribution that non-compliance would entail. Alternatively, and this appears to be more consistent with Gilpin's account, the state acts in self-interest because it assesses that the net balance between the gains and losses made in the transaction is positive. Indeed, if the provision of this public good ultimately generates net benefits to those subordinates, then there may be in fact little reason for weaker states to quarrel with having to help pay for them. The utility of acquiring the benefits of the public good would have to be greater or equal to the disutility of being forced to pay the costs towards that the production of that good. If the aim is to legitimate the dominant state's position within the international system, it would be counterproductive if the costs of extraction outweigh the benefits of the public good generated.⁵

It is also unclear how the extraction of resources from other states by

⁴? does not say much specific about punishment mechanisms. Coercion manifests itself in processes of extraction.

⁵This account is very similar to that told about 'stationary bandits' by Olson (1993). He argues that secure autocrats take an interest in the prosperity of their domains by providing public goods that increase productivity and the consequent amount available for taxation. If Gilpin intends to make a similar claim, Snidal asserts that it would be "insufficient for [Gilpin's] purposes" (587) for the reasons described here.

the hegemon should automatically constitute ‘coercive leadership’ that is malevolent. Gilpin suggests that in this situation the hegemonic state assumes the role of some ‘quasi-government’. Such an environment loses its anarchic characteristics because the preponderant state provides a source of central authority and order within the international system (Milner 1991). To call such an arrangement as ‘coercive leadership’ is odd if only because it is in fact commonplace in the domestic composition of states. Democratic and autocratic regimes alike rely on resource extraction from their domestic populations in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the state’s institutions, finance their militaries, and provide public goods (Mandelbaum, Lake, and Ikenberry 1989; Tilly 1990).

The implication thus appears to be that all governments, regardless of their internal characteristics and constitution, exercise ‘coercive leadership’ over their citizens or subjects. It is true that an important attribute of statehood concerns the ability of the central government to exercise a monopoly on the use of force. Moreover, it is doubtful that without the threat of negative sanctions many citizens would still offer a sizable share of their earnings to the state (Levi 1988). However, even compliance with taxation can be rooted in a variety of motivations other than coercion. It is possible that actors can assent to taxation if they are ideologically predisposed to support the extracting regime. Furthermore, ‘quasi-voluntary compliance’ may offer another possibility. This describes a situation where an individual voluntarily assents to a command after making the observation that non-compliers are subject to coercion. Yet different types of regimes may rely on one form of compliance more than others. Indeed, the form of compliance can be endogenous to the relationship between an individual and the regime. That relationship can depend considerably on whether the latter is democratic or autocratic and how political rights are allocated.

One basic reason for this is that in democratic states citizens are able to exert a significant influence over how governments both form and operate. With regular free and fair elections individuals are able to exercise legal rights to help decide how government policies are chosen. In other words, rulers of a democratic state have to bargain with a wider coalition of interests. This has implications for the extent of the resource extraction as well as the modes of compliance. In contrast, autocratic states are characterized by very different political structures that are generally closed to political competition. In these settings political offices are close such that the proportion of the population that may be able to participate in the government of the state will relatively be low (Dahl 1971). Groups within society might

be the target for extensive resource extraction because they lack relative bargaining power with those groups that ‘capture’ the state. Compliance can, therefore, be more rooted in coercion, especially as the extracted resources are used as rents by political elites to maintain core political support (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003).

Gilpin’s description of an international hierarchical system can only be considered to be coercive if it finds its domestic analogue to be autocratic states. This would entail two things. First, decisions regarding such matters of international governance such as the provision of public goods are made only by the hegemon with little or no input from weaker states. Second, the design and purposes of international institutions disproportionately serve the interests of the hegemon to the possible extent that they are ultimately detrimental to the welfare of weaker states. As much as these might intuitively be understood as features of some coercive order, these necessary conditions are not made explicit in Gilpin’s theory. It is possible for the distribution of benefits to favor the preponderant state, and for the costs of such exploitation to be less than the costs of challenging the preponderant state in Gilpin’s theory. Nevertheless, as Snidal (1985, 588) argues, “it is unclear why the hegemon would use its powers only for the provision of public goods - why would it not also expropriate a wider range of private goods to benefit itself at the expense of other states.” To put it differently, taxation is not a sufficient condition for ‘coercive leadership’ because its implications for the nature of the international order itself remain too ambiguous. As a result, Gilpin’s discussion of ‘coercive leadership’ still leaves a space for voluntary consent to take place.

Snidal also remarks that the difference between ‘benevolent’ and ‘coercive’ leaderships is that the former is predicated on absolute size and the latter is predicated on relative size. This is because absolute size gives the largest actor an incentive to provide public goods out of its own interest rather than capability. Relative size matters significantly for ‘coercive leadership’ because the provision of goods is a function of the relative capability of the stronger actor to extract contributions from secondary states. Yet even this formulation raises several questions. The threshold for when absolute size begins to matter more than relative size in determining state behavior is unclear. Nor is it evident why a ‘benevolent’ leader would not want to simply extract from other states, anyway, because the costs of overthrowing it should be still quite high.

Lake (October 2010) points to another reason for why coercion might

be overstated in supposedly hierarchical contexts. He alleges that a lead state acquires authority in political transactions when it is able to provide such goods as international order and stability to weaker states in return for their compliance and subordination. Authority is conceived here as a relationship between two different actors. One of whom possesses rights to issue and enforce orders to another actor that faces a correlative obligation to satisfy the other's demands. Because legitimacy is premised on a transaction that brings net benefits to both parties it is unclear whether or not the actor's normative structures motivate their continued participation in these hierarchical relationships. After all, it may simply be a story of self-interest that can sufficiently account for patterns of compliance.

When leading states do undertake coercive practices, according to Lake, it is to sustain political orders that subordinate states might generally regard as legitimate. This explains why the US is more likely to engage in militarized disputes involving their subordinate actors even though direct interests might not be involved (Lake 2009). Irrespective of the preferences of the target, American interventions may be palatable for other subordinate states within a region because they nevertheless accept American leadership and the rules it enforces. Coercion is a means to discipline wayward states and must be placed in the context of wider regional cooperation and consent to be understood. Stated differently, if the exercise of coercive force focused on a particular member is needed to protect the overarching international order, it gains acceptability from the participants that benefit from that order. To be sure, one weakness of Lake's argument is to assume that states entered into these hierarchical relationships with the US voluntarily. This is an empirical question that he does not address directly. Nevertheless, Lake does provide a cogent argument for why authority should be understood as central in hegemonic orders.

In sum, a number of analytical challenges appear when using the dimension of coercion and consent to define the character of an international order. Theoretical descriptions of 'benevolent leadership' neglect the coercive aspects of hegemonic rule that often characterized the formation and maintenance of these orders. Conversely, accounts of 'coercive leadership' unsatisfactorily deal with the possibility of consent. This is in part because of a lack of clarity as to whether coercion constitutes a necessary condition for the general contours of archetypal orders.

To be sure, some theories of hegemony and leadership in the wider political theoretical literature seek to find a balance between the two. Gramsci

(1992) applies the concept of hegemony to resolve the puzzle of why socialist revolution had failed to take root in southern European societies in the earlier part of the twentieth century. His explanation was that political and economic elites exercised dominance over the majority of domestic populaces. What was distinctly novel in his account was that those elites did not simply rely on coercion and violence to achieve that domination. Rather they established an ideological or cultural consensus through the use of various institutions (such as ecclesiastical authority) to ensure that the subordinate classes positively identify themselves with ‘ruling class’ values (Joll 1977). Hegemony, simply put, entails a mixture of coercion and consent.

It may be asked as to whether the juxtaposition of coercion and consent has any coherent analytical value. Do the mechanisms adopted to elicit consent ultimately depend on coercion? To what extent is it true that the ability to make the decision to consent to and advocate the ideologies *du jour* a fair and honest one if political circumstances are tilted in favor of incumbent powers? After all, the imposition of these consensus-building institutions is the product of some agent that at some point in time had the capabilities to be in a position to dictate the design of a regime. Resolving these analytical matters provides a possible means to overcome some of the larger difficulties of referring to dimensions of coercion and consent as markers of various regimes. The next section draws on republican political theory to overcome the issues raised here.

3 Domination and Coercion

The purpose of this section is to distinguish between domination and coercion in order to enable a more careful distinction between various forms of hegemonic orders. The main theoretical approach that has already taken seriously this conceptual issue is republican political theory.⁶ The crux of

⁶There is disagreement as to what to call this body of thought. Pettit (1997) prefers the label ‘republican’ because of the anti-monarchist inclinations of some of its more influential proponents in seventeenth century England. Skinner (1998) calls it ‘neo-roman’ in recognition of its intellectual lineage that includes Roman moralists and historians. He argues that the political aspirations and goals of this theory are not incommensurable with the mere presence of a monarch. As a result, in Skinner’s view, the term ‘republican’ is misleading. This paper, however, follows Pettit’s language because it also coincides with recent work in international relations scholarship that discusses in great detail ‘republican’ theory (see Deudney 2006).

‘republicanism’ is the distinction between interference and domination. According to Pettit (1997), liberal theorists have typically conceived of liberty as freedom from constraints. The problem with this negative definition is that it overlooks the paradoxical possibility that there are circumstances (such as having a ‘benign’ master) in which a slave can accordingly be considered as free.

To address this concern republican theorists point out that although the slave may be free from external constraints, its freedoms are ultimately contingent on the preferences or disposition of his master. To use Pettit’s language, the slave is vulnerable to having its freedom of action revoked or subject to the arbitrary interference.⁷ The slave, in short, still experiences domination because the master retains certain prerogatives over him. Pettit defines domination to denote a situation in which an agent’s set of choices may be subject to the arbitrary interference by another. Arbitrary interference, he writes, is the use of coercion that is independent of the preferences of the subordinate actor but correlative of those held by the dominant actor. To be sure, interference can occur without domination. This situation is possible when the interfering agent conditions its actions on the preferences and the interests of the target agent.⁸ The agent that experiences non-dominated interference permits it, and can inhibit it, at any point.

It should be also mentioned that Pettit refers to interference in much the same way as scholars in strategic studies understand coercion. In international relations scholarship, coercion can be defined as the mode by which an agent tries to “affect the behavior of an opponent by manipulating costs and benefits” (Pape 1996, 12). The behavior in question could either be to initiate or cease some course of action. Coercion is used by agents to strike a bargain and thus relies on some convergence of interests (Schelling 1966). Interference, however, generally refers to the “intentional or quasi-intentional worsening of someone’s choice situation ... [that] may reduce the range of options available, or ... alter the expected payoffs assigned to those options” (Pettit 1997, 272). Pettit’s formulation of interference may still be understood as consistent with coercion insofar as the interests or prefer-

⁷Interestingly, Marx (1958) was aware of this situation when he wrote that having civil or political rights (without a certain set of economic rights) in fact enlarges an individual’s dependency on the state. After all, being able to enjoy those rights is a function of the willingness or disposition of those groups that capture the state to respect the allocation of those rights.

⁸ Says Pettit (1997, 23), “[t]he person envisaged relates to me, not as a master, but more in the fashion of an agent who enjoys a power of attorney in my affairs.”

ences of the affected agent are still taken into account. It is when this sort of tracking is removed that interference assumes the form of domination.

In a later discussion of his brand of ‘republican’ theory, Pettit (2008, 73) describes the necessary condition of alien control in a relationship marked by domination. This change of wording does not signal a radical departure from his earlier elaborations of ‘republican’ theory. What is added in this framing of the theory are several axioms that help to clarify aspects of the theory put forth. First, Pettit affirms the reality of personal choice in which individuals can choose some option from a choice menu that they have. Second, there is a possibility of alien control insofar as there are some social relationships that can be described as domination. Alien control refers to the external actor being able to exercise arbitrary power. Third, alien control is positional (or relational) in this scenario because the subordinate actor cannot countervail the control held by the dominant actor. There cannot be equality (in status) between agents. Applying these concepts to world politics helps to elucidate them further. He recognizes that certain strategies typically employed in interstate relations such as ‘intentional obstruction, coercion, deception, and manipulation’ constitute examples of interference. Yet they do not *ipso facto* constitute alien control. This instead occurs when there is a process of invigilation. If the dominated agent performs an action contrary to the desires of the (presiding or overseeing) dominant agent, and the dominant agent would thus interfere with that implementation of that choice, then the situation would resemble that of domination.

The scope or character of interference does not necessarily have to operate interactively. After all, one possible issue raised here is that the actions that might constitute interference here do not include indirect forms of coercion such as social practices or conventions. Recent theoretical work has sought to advance our understanding of these forms of coercion. Valentini (2011, 210-212) distinguishes between what she calls ‘interactional coercion’ and ‘systemic coercion’. She defines ‘interactional coercion’ as a situation in which “an agent A coerces another agent B if A foreseeably and avoidably places nontrivial constraints on B’s freedom, compared to B’s freedom in the absence of A’s intervention”. This is not at all dissimilar to how Pettit approaches his definition of interference. By contrast, ‘systemic coercion’ is described as “a system of rules S ... if it foreseeably and avoidably places nontrivial constraints on some agents’ freedom, compared to their freedom in the absence of that system.” A system of rules include informal or formal institutions that an individual (or group) agent installs to ensure other agents conform to certain patterns of behavior. It is conceivable, though, domi-

nation as described by Pettit can encompass this form of coercion should the system of rules be instituted without the interests or preferences of the subject agent being taken into account. Indeed, the archetypal example of the master and slave depends in large part on a certain normative structure that supplies meanings to the identity those two agents have of themselves and their relationship with each other.

Implicit in this distinction of domination and coercion/interference is a particular notion of power that ought to be considered against the wider literature on the very concept itself. Barnett and Duvall (2005) offer a typology of various understandings of power that have been used to describe a variety of relations in international politics. They describe four alternative specifications of power along two dimensions. The first concerns the relational specificity that power is projected, distinguishing between direct and diffuse forms of power. The second focuses on the channels through which power produces its effects. These channels may be the interactions of specific actors or the social relations of constitution. The standard definition of power in the political science literature serves to capture the ability of an agent A to get agent B to do something that they would not otherwise do. According to their taxonomic scheme, this is a more compulsive form of power that works that works directly and through the interactions of agents.

How power is conceived in the republican theory of domination fits uneasily in this schematic. After all, the description of (non-alien) interference, as much as it is consistent with standard definitions of coercion, is in line with the conception of power specified above. Nevertheless, a situation characterized by domination suggests that the superordinate agent enjoys a certain status that confers upon it privileges vis-à-vis the subjugated agent. One might argue that such a relationship is marked by structural power, which determines “the very social capacities of structural, or subject, positions in direct relation to one another, and the associated interests, that underlie and dispose action” (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 52-53).⁹ In other words, an agent can only be constituted as a ‘slave’ if and only if another agent can be identified as a ‘master’ - they are mutually constituted agents. The problem that confronts understanding domination as ‘structural’ is that the actual behaviors of agents embedded in these relations are not necessarily pre-determined. A slave need not behave in a manner consistent with our expectations of that role not only because of his cunning but also because the master supplies him considerable latitude. Either agent might have the

⁹That is to say, there may still be significant room for agency.

ability to choose their actions according to their preferences; indeed, the slave can act as if it were a free individual under domination in special circumstances. It may not be the case then that the slave will simply behave slavishly. It is only when the master activates interference in disregard to the interests and preferences of the slave that domination acquires an element of compulsion.

4 Recasting Hierarchical Orders

Differences between hierarchical orders then should not be drawn theoretically based on whether they are marked by coercion or consent. Rather, hierarchic orders ought to be distinguished by whether they feature coercion or domination. Coercion, or the possibility thereof, is too commonplace in international politics that appealing to a concept of ‘consent’ may be marked by several theoretical challenges. After all, interactions between states usually take place under the shadow of power. Both structural realists and liberals recognize that states use various instruments in bargaining with each other so to arrive at outcomes closer to their own ideal points (Fearon 1995; Moravcsik 1997; Reiter and Stam 2002). Indeed, Pettit (2008) recognizes that certain strategies typically employed in interstate relations such as ‘intentional obstruction, coercion, deception, and manipulation’ constitute examples of interference. Yet they do not *ipso facto* constitute alien control. This instead occurs when there is a process of invigilation through which the dominant agent interferes in a way that deprives the subjugated actor the ability to realize its interests or preferences. It is the imposition of the dominant actor’s will that takes place. This is very different from a situation that occurs in which a bargain is made that is ‘acceptable’ to both parties (no matter the asymmetry between them).

Thus, we can delineate two ideal-types. Hierarchies of non-domination are arrangements in which the superordinate agent might use coercive instruments against weaker agents in order to shape international political outcomes to its own liking. Yet the use of these instruments is such that the superordinate agent does not hold weaker agents ultimately hostage to its whims. To clarify this further, the political existence of the weaker state is not at the mercy of the superordinate agent. The lesser regime does not depend on the disposition of the more powerful state. Hierarchies marked by domination, however, are arrangements in which weaker agents might face a situation whereby they have no choice but to commit to an action or policy

that is demanded of them. This situation might be obviated if the stronger state is magnanimous in granting liberty to the weaker state or if the weaker state's leadership is cunning enough to evade any reprisals for insubordinate behavior. Nevertheless, any provision of liberty here is contingent on the stronger state's policies.

To use an extreme historical example to illustrate domination, the Mytilene's inclusion in the Athenian Empire could be described as intense domination because their fate was ultimately at the mercy of Athenian 'goodwill'. After all, their revolt to gain autonomy not only was violent suppressed but also provoked debate amongst voting Athenians on the fate of the oligarchic city. That the planned massacre was cancelled does not change the nature of the relationship between Mytilene and Athens. If anything, it clarified the relationship insofar as it shows that the survivability of the political regime and society of the Mytilenes was ultimately beholden to Athens. Many colonial relations that emerged in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries fit this profile because even the indigenous (or local) colonial elite faced a situation of invigilation and interventionism by their European and sovereign overseers. For the longest time these elites could not challenge their subordinate status and risked intense suppression should they deviate from the behaviors expected of them. To say that these elites might have worked voluntarily for foreign empires as willing collaborators misses the subtle point that they were nevertheless beholden to the interests of their imperial overseers. Indeed, the survival of colonial elites as political agents within these arrangements depended almost exclusively on their ties to empire. The same qualitative relationship characterized the Soviet Union's relationship with its satellites in Central-Eastern Europe during the Cold War. As much as elites might have operated with some degree of volition, they depended greatly on Moscow's actions for their political survival. Attempting to autonomously pursue a course of action inimical to the regime risked the imposition of brute force. Indeed, the Brezhnev Doctrine is an expression of domination over the communist states of Central-Eastern Europe.

An example of interference without domination may be found in the general intercourse between states whereby states use a variety of policy instruments to obtain policy outcomes that are consistent with their own preferences or interests (Baldwin 1971, 1985). Non-arbitrary interference may be found in the historical pattern of relations between a number of Western European states and the US in the formative years of the Cold War. After all, Lundestad (1986) describes how the role of the US was

essentially an ‘empire by invitation’. The appeal of this particular way of describing American presence on the European continent is found in its recognition that the US may have still practiced coercion. Nevertheless, that coercion was practiced in a way that was, in large part, desired by the Western European states. The US played the role of the “attorney” (Pettit 1997, 23).

The use of domination to describe the relationship of stronger states with their weaker counterparts is thus not the same as Lake’s description of ‘authority’. Recall that authority is the product of the contract made between a dominant actor and the subordinate actor in which social order is exchanged for the latter’s compliance. The possibility that the use of force could have been instrumental in forming these hierarchical relationships does not bother Lake because “most of today’s nation-states, for instance, were originally forged through conquest and violence” (MacDonald and Lake 2008, 177). Ultimately, these nation-states found a way of legitimating their governance populations to make them acceptable to members of the society nested within them. But what matters, however, is not whether brute force was the basis of the relationship here. Rather, it is whether the subordinate has the capability to act independently without being subject to the arbitrary invigilation of an external agent. The dominant actor might try to legitimate the inequality it enjoys vis-à-vis lesser actors.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to elucidate some of the challenges that one might confront in using references to levels of consent and coercion to draw out differences amongst hierarchical order. Models of ‘benevolent’ and ‘coercive’ leadership, for example, remain unclear in delineating the reasons for which powerful states would do the things they would do in order to be labeled one way or the other. Rather than simply point out these frustrations, this paper hopes to draw attention to the republican political theory. This body of thought, represented here by the work of Pettit, takes the challenge of distinguishing between various modes of control seriously in a way that might be of interest to scholars in international politics. Rather than looking at ‘consent’ and ‘coercion’, as this paper argues here, it may be theoretically more tractable to examine patterns of ‘interference’ and ‘domination’ instead.

But how do we measure domination? It is, after all, ultimately a status that does not exist in objective circumstances. Even if one were to grant the

plausibility of this approach, this still might do little to allay concerns over the feasibility of attempts to reliably observe domination in world politics. There have only been a few studies that attempt to measure status in world politics and these have not been found to be problem-free (e.g., Renshon 2011; Singer and Small 1966). Notwithstanding the empirical difficulties that might be confronted in using the concepts advanced here, there may still be theoretical utility in unpacking what we mean when we describe hierarchical arrangements in international affairs.

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