

## ***Book Reviews***

**Hegemony and democracy.** By Bruce Russett. New York : Routledge, 2011, pp. 259. ISBN : 978-0-415-57570-6.

**Reviewer :** Wunti, Musa Adamu (PhD Candidate).

We are in the world of struggle for power and domination between states and non-state actors. The idea of hegemony and democracy is nowadays an important element of expanding networks to the extent that hegemony undermines or supports democracy. Bruce Russett raises the question of whether hegemony is sustainable, especially when the hegemon is a democratic state. By applying theories of collective action and foreign policy, the author looks into American hegemony in the contemporary international system and the possibility for a democratic hegemon to retain its power and influence in the nearest future. Bruce Russett is a Professor of International Politics at Yale University. This compilation of his previously published articles forms his twenty seventh books, and one of these books with John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace* won him the International Studies association prize for best Book of the decade.

Russett's *Hegemony and Democracy* is divided into thirteen chapters. The first chapter is an intellectual history of American hegemony by positing that, "dominance is a condition never reached without an effort. And to achieve superiority over others requires strength, skill, determination, and luck." This chapter is to sets out that hegemony has some limitations giving example of US invasion of Iraq in 2003 which showed that regime change was harder than the Bush administration believed. His work represents ample contestations relating to global hegemony, especially the degrees to which democracy empower or hamper a hegemon.

Chapter two presents the authors belief that democratic politics may encourage or constrain expansionary foreign policies. This chapter, "Democracy, war and expansion through historical lenses", elucidates the argument that great power even if it is a democracy tend to be more prone to war than less powerful states, democracy or not. An important example that he develops is the successful militarized disputes in interstate war leading to thousand deaths which are more common between democracies and less between non-democratic states in history. Thus the author asks questions about the relationship between democracy and hegemony. The theoretical framework used to explain such relationship brings out a probabilistic notion about the behaviour between pairs of states, in terms of their culture and motivation in deploying fighting forces. Indeed, considering the range of great powers' involvement in series of fights as theorized by Thucydides, Russett perceived such act as expansionism.

Chapter three focuses on the role of ideas and theories in determining the strategies employed in fixing the expansionist foreign policy. He explained US dependence on resources imported from other countries that matter most to her national interest. These raw materials are strategic to US economy and military capabilities. This chapter gave a comprehensive example of threat to US strategic foreign policy by citing the oil crisis of 1970s which shocked the economy of great power. As a result, the US foreign policy then changed to use force whenever its national interest or values come under threat.

Chapter four and five gave an overview of the possibility of retention or otherwise of US hegemony given the growing number of challengers like the Chinese economic and military strength. While recognizing the US hegemonic power throughout the period of cold war, Russett postulated that, with the growing proliferation of nuclear technology and its development by adversaries, great power nuclear hegemony is now declining. Part of the reasons advanced by the author is that the use of nuclear weapons is impossible in war considering its devastating effects to parties involved. As such, deterring opponent with nuclear weapons is now useless and waste of resources and talent. In the earlier decades, nuclear weapons and promises by powerful states to use them, helped the viability of centralized power globally. But nuclear proliferations have brought a set back and have undermined great powers' dominance and control.

Chapter six and seven point out the impact of cold war and its role towards US nonviolent expansion of global hegemony at the end of the war. For the author, US expansionary foreign policy has led to the demise of its regional rival hegemon in the international system. Its influence according to Russett has invariably resulted to some changes in the political and economic policies of Soviet Union that led to its demise. The discussion shows how sudden change in Soviet Union's foreign policy pushed its adversaries into the formation of a united force in the international system.

The next three chapters of the book deals with important roles played by the international organizations in the regulation of the system via the formation of effective international governmental organizations aimed at bringing democratic states under the umbrella of the United Nations. This body serves as regulatory agency enabling and restraining the hegemon, like UN Security Council. Russett questions how democratic international organization like UN will be in the global system without being affected in its institutional process by the hegemonic powers. The issue raised here is the crisis of legitimacy facing the effectiveness of the UN in terms of its decision making powers. Thus, hegemonic power has the advantage of leading the UN directly or indirectly.

Chapter eleven focuses on the Kant's perspectives on international relations showing a dramatic change in warfare and the number of casualties in the world. Three important variables are shown to have linked to liberalism and its impetus on promoting peace globally. These variables comprise democracy and the hegemonic desire to spread it all over the world, international division of labour through multiple networks of communication, trade and finance-globalization and the multiplication of intergovernmental organization hoping to implement the interest of the hegemonic

powers in democratic governments and beyond. In essence the author pays attention to describing different theoretical postulates ranging from earliest perspectives to Kantian perspective in order to better our understanding of the relationships between power, hegemony and liberalism.

The next chapter adds some vital information on US involvement in the World War II as an effort to prevent foreign military threats and explain strategies employed by America. The last chapter which the author called the conclusion deals with democracy, hegemony and collective action. In this chapter Russett describes and analyses the relevance of realist and liberalist approaches in explaining international relations, particularly in relation to the application of power and its effect on how elites design foreign policy. He again questions whether hegemony is sustainable internationally. Considering the nature of international system within which an alliance takes place among states, security to members is obtainable even though costs and benefits may not be shared equally. It is here that Russett explains the role of economic power and capitalism as a source of power. The final section concluded with big question as to how long can a state be both hegemonic and democratic.

To sum up, this book is a significant contribution to the literature in international relations and helps understand some of the contradictions exhibited by politics of dominance and power retention in the international system. The author provides a critique of US hegemony and expresses fear on the possibility of sustaining this hegemonic power. While diverting from the ideal principle of democratic state US according to this book is likely to degrade as an empire of a chaotic failed hegemony.

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**Islamic activists : The anti-enlightenment democrats.** By Deina Ali Abdelkader. London : Pluto Press, 2011, pp. viii-157. ISBN 978 – 0 – 7453 – 2216 – 2.

**Reviewer :** Sherry Marlina Bt. Shharuddin (PhD Candidate),  
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The Arab uprising has attracted attentions especially when the uprising was made against regimes that have long been in power. The mass movements against the regime were unique because men and women of all religious and social backgrounds protested across the country demanding an end to dictatorship and economic corruption. However, among the protests there were elements of Islamists who have been fighting the government for a long time and suffered under those regimes. Many of them have been tortured, imprisoned, murdered and force to exile in secluded parts of the country. Deina Ali Abdelkader has studied these mass uprisings against regimes. She also studied the role of Shari'ah and Muslim's expectations as well as Islamist leaders, their ideas and writings.

This book is useful for those who want to know more about the contemporary political ideology and Middle East as well as North Africa. This book is easy to read since

the author uses a simple language to describe the ideas of the three popular Islamist leaders. Deina Ali Abdelkader has taught at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Tufts University and Cairo University. She is a member of the Islamic Jurisprudential Council of North America and an executive committee member of the Religion and Politics in the American Political Science Association. The author has been studying Islamic Activism and was fascinated by the Islamic legal thought especially on social justice. She has written *Social Justice in Islam* in 2000 that focused on Islamic Activists, mass movement and Islamic Law. However, this is the first book she wrote on the three populist Islamist leaders and critically analyses Western secular democratic theory.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter analyses the Western thinkers and the views on the conflict between reason and faith which will determine whether secularism is a prerequisite for establishing a democratic state. In this chapter, the author explains the views of three different groups, Orientalist, Islamist and Rationalist and their perceptions on the relationship between faith and reason. The author also discusses the progress that shapes the ways writers and thinkers think on the relationship between reason and faith by examining the Enlightenment writers, colonial perceptions, the Weberian paradigm, structural functionalists and modernization theory as well as Islamist views.

In the second chapter, the author discusses the contributions made by Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi. The author specifically discusses his works because of the Islamic Law (shari'ah) legacy that has remained central to the Muslim political thought. The Islamic law constitutes the ideal social blueprint and aspiration for a good society. In the third chapter, the author discusses Yusuf al-Qaradawi's contributions. He is known as a major exponent of a centrist position and democracy based on tenets of Islamic faith and informed by Islamic history. In this chapter, the author examines his life and the development of his theoretical approach to knowledge and democracy. In the fourth chapter, the author concentrates on the contributions made by Rachid al-Ghannouchi, the founder and spiritual leader of the Tunisian Islamic movement, al-Nahdah. The author examines al-Ghannouchi's life and his works and shows how his views have changed after the failure of 1967 war. According to the author, these changing views become a barometer of the political evolution of modern Middle Eastern societies.

In the fifth chapter, the author examines Abdessalam Yassine, who is the founder of the Justice and Benevolence movement in Morocco. Yassine is well known as a prolific writer and his publications address topics such as democracy, reason, *ijtihad*, and the concept of guardianship (rulership) in Muslim communities. In this chapter, the author showed Yassine's views on Western democracy and the nature of Khilafah (guardianship) by emphasizing the moral code and ethos of a future Islamic state.

The sixth chapter is on the ideas of three Islamists on reason and its relation to faith comparatively by examining Islamic writings and Western liberal thoughts. In this chapter, the author noted the principle of accountability in Islamist's writings and that faith can be consistent with both morality and reason. The same argument lies at the heart

of some Western political thinkers such as Rousseau, and De Tocqueville. The author noted that the perceptions of “common good” differ from one society to another. These perceptions also apply to the definitions of democracy. There are many different views on the concept and theory of democracy but she finds that there are some elements in those arguments that did not contradict one another. Both Islamic and Western political thinkers argued that democracy is not a unilateral project and elections are not the hallmark of democracy. To the author, “Enlightenment rationalism” which rejects any role of religion in political life is deeply flawed. The author believes that Muslims should define democracy individually and formulate their own unique versions of just governance.

This book of Deina Ali Abdelkader is informative. However, Deina, chose three different figures that contribute to Islamic political thought. The difference between them is clear : al-Qaradawi is considered by many as clerics and Islamic theologian and not a political thinker. The same can be said about al-Shatibi. The author considered the two along Ghannouchi as political thinkers and that they represent Islamic political thought. However, these figures are not political thinkers though they had prominent roles in Islamist movements in their own countries. Their views mostly reflect their grievances against the government and therefore, their ideas reflect their own political interest. It is important for scholars not to generalize their ideas and views and assume the three figures to be the representative of Muslims.

The author indicates her dislike of the American views on democracy and the Enlightenment views of some of the Western political thinkers. In the preface, the author clarifies that this book aims at clarifying a certain discourse unfamiliar to the Western world. Therefore, the book is written for the Western audience who may want to know about Islamic contemporary political theory. Nevertheless, the book is a good read for serious students and scholars of Islamic political theory. Deina Ali Abdelkader tried to explain and compare Islamist ideas by focusing on their views of democracy. The author was hoping to remove any confusion of Muslims and the non-Muslims in West on the theory of democracy and the conflict over relationship between religion and faith.

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**International relations in Southeast Asia : Between bilateralism and multilateralism.** Edited by N.Ganesan and Ramses Amer. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010, pp. 372. ISBN : 9814279579.

**Reviewer :** Dawud Pawang (PhD Candidate).

Since the post- Cold War period, multilateralism has gained prominence as an approach for forging international consensus on a number of issues. Multilateralism refers to three or more countries coming together to deal with issues of common interests. During the Cold War, forging multilateralism consensus on issues tended to be more difficult because of ideological differences between the two blocs. However, the end of the Cold

War in 1991, accelerated the process of global development which had an impact on international relations of many regions and, specifically, of Southeast Asia. It led to the expansion of ASEAN in the 1990s to include all ten Southeast Asian countries and subsequently, they introduced a number of multilateral initiatives on their own.

The lead editor, N. Ganesan, is a Professor of Southeast Asian politics at the Hiroshima Peace Institute in Japan. His research interests are in intrastate and interstate sources of tension and conflict in Southeast Asia. The other editor is Ramses Amer, an Associate Professor in peace and Conflict Research and a senior Research Fellow at the centre for Pacific Asia Studies, Department of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University. His major areas of research include security issues and conflict resolution in Southeast Asia. This work is the result of papers presented at two international workshops held in Hiroshima and Kuala Lumpur in December 2007 and October 2008. The project concentrated on bilateralism and multilateralism in Southeast Asia.

In the first part, the book gives details concerning the evolution of bilateralism and multilateralism in international relations theory and examines the general dynamics of international relations in Southeast Asia, specifically the evolution of multilateralism in the region. In order to provide the case studies with common frames of reference as well as a number of common questions. The authors provide definitions of such concepts as multilateralism, multilateral/regional institutions, regionalism versus regionalization, networks, forum shopping, and bilateralism. Another concept dealt with is "democratic clubs." These clubs need not be global or regional institutions, they can also operate as networks.

There are questions about how effective are they? Have ASEAN and its offspring gained traction? Do they function as a security community? Have they aggregated political and economic interests collectively? Have they worked together to resolve their internal security problems and protect each other against external threats? The answer to these questions are either negative or non-equivocal. ASEAN's inability in resolving persistent sub-regional tensions, include the Thai-Myanmar confrontation over the latter's drug trafficking and allegations by Myanmar that Thailand provides sanctuary for Myanmar's Karen minority who are fighting to create a separate homeland, Thai concerns about support from northern Malaysia to separatists in southern Thailand, discord between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta over huge amount of illegal Indonesian workers seeking jobs in Malaysia, a similar problem with illegal Philippine labourers in Sabah, and the dispute over the Spratly Islands where China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei contest ownership. It was suggested that the primary reason for ASEAN's inability to deal effectively with these issues is its normative attachment to the principle of non-interference. If regionalism is to be more than a process of multilateral policy coordination and negotiation of competing stakeholder interests, then a sense of collective inter-subjective identity among members is required.

The author goes to explain how security regionalism in Southeast Asia remains weak. That the absence of interoperability among the region's armed forces, embedded

suspicious about neighbours' motivations, and an inability to set up effective arrangements to cope with transnational challenges, all tend to move security cooperation by default to the bilateral level. Nevertheless, with the new ASEAN Charter adopted at the 2007 summit, this situation could change. The point is that, non-traditional security (e.g., transnational crime, piracy, terrorism, pandemics, human and drug trafficking) require multilateral cooperation.

In the second and third sections, contributors deal with case studies of bilateral relations, comprising four case studies of bilateral relations among mainland countries and five case studies among maritime countries in Southeast Asia. Writers focus on identifying the most important and sensitive issues in such bilateral relationships and then, they identify further how these issues are dealt with at the bilateral level and whether there had been recourse to multilateralism.

After a long time of mutual suspicion and hostility (since 1975), Vietnam- Thailand relations could improve only in the post-Cold-War era. Vietnam began to change its foreign policy priorities towards Thailand and accepted the ASEAN mode of regional cooperation. The new worldview and the subsequent re-definition of national interests and re-ordering of foreign policy priorities after 1986 have led Vietnam to see Thailand in a new light, less influenced by ideological considerations and wartime experiences. In addition, when Vietnam and other Indochinese states joined ASEAN, the multilateral context helped to ensure relations between them, then they shared norms and identity which were consolidated by increased interactions at all level among ASEAN countries that helped standardize behaviour for them all. Therefore, the bilateral and multilateral dynamics have provided a good basis for stable and cooperative relations between the two countries in the post- Cold War era. In the case of Vietnam-Cambodia relations, the writer provided the empirical evidence of their bilateral relations since 1975. Their relationship has been plagued by two core issues : the territorial disputes and the situation of the ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia. However, the two countries officially claimed to be working closely in both regional and sub- regional framework (e.g., ASEAN, the Greater Mekong Sub- regional, and the Mekong River Commission). The main ambition of both Vietnam and Cambodia is to expand economic relations, if it can be sustained then the remaining issues such as the maritime disputes could be managed peacefully and their relationship may move from trouble to cooperation.

Thailand and Myanmar have also suffered from strained relations. Drugs and refugee flows remain as the central issues. Different regimes with different outlooks on foreign relations can certainly produce different thoughts on conflict resolution. So are there certain interests on both sides to keep contentious issues unsettled? Do they need some kind of bargaining power to get them through such a fragile relationship?

Among ASEAN countries, most of their bilateral relations are related to some kind of disputes, for example, the problems of cross- border intrusions, illegal migration and illegal fishing in Thai- Malay relations, and separatist group and Filipino migrants in Sabah, etc. In contrast, bilateral relations between Indonesia and the Philippines have been stable and cooperative since the establishment in 1949. Their relations have never

been as close as the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia or Indonesia and Singapore, however, they have never experienced any turbulence in their relationship compared to Indonesia's bilateral relationship with Malaysia and Singapore. Any mutual problems faced by the two countries, have always been resolved successfully through dialogue between the heads of both government. Urgent issues such as security in the border areas can also be solved at the ministerial level or through cooperation between the militaries and the police forces.

The book makes it clear that there are many different forms of international cooperation with different meanings attached to them. The term multilateralism became a focus of analysis in the 1990s, it is a set of protocols demanding that states forego some of their own narrow interests in order to achieve general organizing principles in relationships characterized by diffused reciprocity. Solingen thinks that a convergence of domestic coalition strategies among dominant actors favouring internationalization provides a powerful incentive for multilateralism, and it was such convergence that spurred ASEAN. However, the cases analysed in the book have documented that bilateralism is a well-established policy response in Southeast Asian international relations. Bilateralism is a useful mechanism with substantial historical precedence in the resolution of problems between geographically proximate states, specifically, in the South Asian case.

In many instances, bilateralism preceded the onset of multilateralism in Southeast Asia. There appears to be a large number of reasons privileging bilateralism over multilateralism, mainly, because history has privileged bilateralism and provided policy formulators with an established practice and venue in dealing with adjacent states. This historical imperative in turn derived from the geographical necessity in coping with dense transactions and interactions. Consequently, history and geography combine to provide the forceful evidence in favour of liberalism. The accumulated interactions and knowledge derived from bilateralism subsequently serve to under grid the practice and establish it as a preferred medium through which international relations may be conducted. It may be argued that the levels of compliance in bilateralism is likely to be higher and attendant transactional costs significantly lower than what it would be in a multilateral setting.