

## INTERNATIONAL SECURITY RELATIONS AND POST-IMPERIAL ORDERS

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### Abstract

*This paper intends to investigate the relations between former imperial powers and new sovereign states succeeding an empire in the field of international security, particularly when involving the use of force. Despite their stated attachment to the normative principles of what we usually call “Westphalian order”, former imperial powers continue to interfere in the domestic affairs of these new states, especially those unable to exercise their sovereignty efficiently and legitimately. One could say that, by military interventions, these powers deny the sovereignty of weak states in the regions once under their control; but the preparation of these missions makes the actions not to be interpreted as expressions of an imperialist attitude. I consider there are two major ideal-types that could better explain such interventions. In a power-oriented post-imperial order, the intervention of a former empire is the result of the projection of its national interests and identities. In a norm-oriented post-imperial order, the sense of moral responsibility of the former imperial power is the main reason for its interference. The intervention’s legitimacy and suitability require domestic and international support. This paper, grounded on a constructivist approach, intends to contribute to the understanding of international security issues in terms of a world shaped by actors’ interests and identities and the dynamics of their relations. The identified ideal-types of post-imperial orders consider both material and cultural factors. The analytical elements that may link extremely different situations are the socially variable interpretations of past and present.*

**Keywords:** *empire; hegemony; intervention; power-oriented post-imperial order (POPIO); norm-oriented post-imperial order (NOPIO).*

The term “empire” seems to have gained in recent IR literature an incredible spreading, its usage covering various interpretations of the contemporary social world, as for the expansion of the global capitalism, or the projection of American military and political power, or the leveling of political expectations worldwide, and so on. In spite of their different meanings, all the forms the term “empire” is used suggest the image of unity and of an (un)conscious march toward this unity, or the “imperialism”. In this paper I use the term “empire” in a more narrow (and old-fashioned) way, as a territorial political entity.

Despite this precaution, to define an empire is not a simple task. In the last half of millennium, we have witnessed the progressive establishment of what it is generally called the “Westphalian” order, where the political space is divided into separate territorial sovereign states, interacting in an anarchical environment. At least since the end of the two World Wars, the dominant idea of the legitimate organizing principle of a sovereign state is the expression of the will of a political community shaped into a nation defined by the “self-determination” principle. It is precisely the claim of every nation to benefit from sovereignty that makes the system to be

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anarchic, in the absence of any authority capable to impose the order into the system, by power and legitimacy.

This conception is somehow misleading, because it is obvious that this legalistic point of view does not have an authentic correspondent in the political reality, for the contact between the nation-states. In fact, the supposed anarchy of the international realm should be considered in practice only in part, the states observing several ways of dealing with the anarchy. Many factors, material and ideational as well, contribute to the formation of a much more complex international realm, in particular due to the way the political entities understand and exercise the sovereignty, inside the borders and during their interactions with others. In a famous article, Alexander Wendt points out that the anarchy has multiple meanings, which appear from the interactions among states.<sup>1</sup> By supporting a constructivist perspective toward International Relations, I take into account the importance of the interactions among actors in defining their interests and identities, in a mutually constitutive relation between structure (anarchy) and actors. I thus consider that the meanings of “security” and “sovereignty” are socially constructed, dynamic, and interconnected.<sup>2</sup>

It is not my intention to investigate all the social meanings of the sovereignty and security that occur during interactions among political entities, from the shared sovereignty of EU member states to the establishment of some sort of hierarchy. In this paper I shall focus on the interventions made by the former imperial powers, mainly with military means, in the territories that used to be under their control.

The starting points for investigating such a theme are three empirical observations. Firstly, the weak states facing an external intervention that I envisage are mainly those that used to be part of an empire, now part of what is generally known as the Third World. Secondly, the former imperial power tends to be the main subject (if not the only one) of the intervention, so that it can be granted a special interest in conducting the operation. The question that I raise is why precisely the former empire is taking the initiative in dealing with the situation and the answer I suggest is that happens because of the special links that bond the two actors. I group such links in a “post-imperial order”. Thirdly, I consider that these interventions can be divided into two major categories: those designated mainly to protect interests of the former imperial patron and those that have as the prime objective to protect the lives and properties of the people living in the countries affected by the failure of the state.

Based on these three observations, I suggest in this paper that the post-imperial orders imply that the former imperial powers are in particular interested in interfering in those weak states that used to be under their control. The relations among states succeeding an empire would thus have distinguishing features from other kinds of international links. In my opinion, these special relations between the former centre and subordinated units of an empire, the post-imperial identities and interests, could offer some good answers for the study of contemporary international security issues.

In order to investigate the post-imperial orders, the first necessary step would be a definition of the empire and to distinguish it from other forms of political dominance over alien territories. Once we identified the empire, it is possible to discuss the post-imperial order. The third section of the paper is dedicated to identification and definition of two ideal-types of post-imperial order that I call *power-oriented post-imperial order* (POPIO) and, respectively, *norm-oriented post-imperial order* (NOPIO). As I suggest in the final part of the paper, these two

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics”, *International Organization*, 46 (1992): 391-425.

<sup>2</sup> I tried to demonstrate this idea in Radu-Sebastian Ungureanu, *Securitate, suveranitate și instituții internaționale. Crizele din Europa de Sud-Est în anii '90* [Security, Sovereignty, and International Institutions: The South-East European Crisis of the '90s] (Iași: Polirom, 2010).

ideal-types may be used when discussing various post-imperial approaches toward international security.

As from the theoretical and methodological approach, as already said, the paper should be considered in the light of a moderate form of constructivism. By this, I consider the importance of material and ideational factors as well, a double determination relationship between agents and structure, that the identities and interests of the actor should be considered in a relation of co-determination, and so on. Also, due to the permanent social interactions, I take into consideration a dynamic perspective on the institutions and meanings.

### Empire and hegemony

Usually, a military intervention (as the acts of inter-state war as well) can be interpreted as a denial of the sovereignty of the object of intervention. What I have in mind are the interventions made on the territory of weak states, unable to enforce the sovereignty they enjoy in an effective and legitimate way, but only in a formal or legalistic manner. In these particular cases, the intervention is not seen as the expression of an imperialist attitude, as long as it is not designed to lead to the construction of an empire.

In such cases, we should reconsider the meaning of anarchy as a characteristic of international relations. In the field of the security institutions, in the military dimension of the term, David Lake considers that there are some sorts of arrangements where the anarchy is replaced by some forms of hierarchy between two sovereign states. He identifies in this respect several increasingly hierarchic security institutions, such as the spheres of influence, protectorates, informal empires, and empires<sup>3</sup>.

Even if I consider that Lake is right in identifying some forms of hierarchy in these cases, I think that the empire should be distinguished from other forms, even informal, of hierarchic organizations. In my view, the main concurrent of the term “empire” in this matter is that of “hegemon”. Both of these two concepts imply a form of dominance of a political centre over some foreign subjects and territories, but in a different manner. As a specific difference from “hegemony”, an empire would be defined by the legitimate monopoly of one centre of power to generate and interpret the rules of the system in a given space (considered in territorial and/or cultural terms). On the contrary, in the hegemony case the simple recognition of the sovereignty of the other part implies that this actor is entitled in formulating and enforcing some specific rules on his own territory. In other words, in the case of an empire, the dominance of the centre is inner-directed, while regarding the hegemony the dominance of the centre is an outer-directed one.<sup>4</sup>

The previous claim can be sustained if we consider two major features of an empire, that being its vocation of universality and unity (anti-entropy) over the particularities of national order (most empires), of the component states (as the German Empire – the Second *Reich*, where the

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<sup>3</sup> David A. Lake. “Beyond Anarchy. The Importance of Security Institutions”, *International Security*, 26 (2001): 132-133.

<sup>4</sup> According to Michael Doyle’s well-known definition, an empire consists of the “effective control whether formal or informal, of a subordinated society by an imperial society” - Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1986,30. A different position is to consider several forms of exercising influence over subordinated societies beside the empire – dominions, suzerainty, and hegemony. A discussion on this topic can be found in Barry Buzan, Richard Little, *International Systems in World History. Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 176-182. In my view, as I shall show, the sovereignty, norm monopoly, decision autonomy, responsibility and common project are main issues in differentiating an empire from other types of dominance, which I generally group in the hegemony family.

previous existing political units, as the Kingdom of Bavaria, preserved some elements of statehood), religious, linguistic, etc, order, and a consciousness of the self-assumed mission. This second dimension – ideology – also legitimizes imperial expansion. On the other hand, following the views of well-known scholars of different orientations, as George Modelski<sup>5</sup>, Robert Gilpin<sup>6</sup>, or Robert Cox<sup>7</sup>, we could state that the hegemony is generally considered as the capacity of a political centre to produce the most performing rules and to impose them in the international system in its own profit in a competitive manner. As Peter Taylor puts it, a hegemonic state is a counter-imperial project<sup>8</sup>.

These two positions – of an imperial or a hegemonic state – can be fulfilled by the same political centre, but not necessary. By taking a look at the roles played by Britain during, roughly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we would find out that it was a participant at the European balance of power (a great power among others), the political centre of its empire, but the world's hegemon, as long as she imposed international rules such as the gold standard, the anti-slavery and anti-piracy policies, the free trade, etc, norms to be observed not only by the small states, but also by her competitors in the imperial project. One could also say that even the imperialist project was also a norm, to be followed by every great power of the time with the ambition of being treated as such. The Italian or German claims of a right in building a colonial empire in the pre-War World I era are eloquent in this direction.

The difference between empire and hegemony appears even clearer if we take a closer look to the specific orders they create. For the hegemonic power, the order is considered to address some sovereign units, so that at least formally one could say that it faces an anarchic order. On the other hand, in the case of an empire a metropolitan power imposes an imperial order over alien societies/ territories in two major ways. The first is the material and legal superiority in violent means, even if in many cases a monopoly in this matter is lacking. Secondly, an empire is a common normative system, both formal and informal, even if some local particularities are allowed.<sup>9</sup>

The normative monopoly seems to be the most important defining feature of an empire, the claim of the legitimate violent means being only its necessary consequence. In this respect, the influential *Empire* of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri is very suggestive: “The concept of Empire is presented as a global concert under the direction of a single conductor, a unitary power that maintains the social peace and produces its ethical truths. And in order to achieve these ends, the single power is given the necessary force to conduct, when necessary, “just wars” at the borders against the barbarians and internally against the rebellious.”<sup>10</sup> The “natural” expansionism of the empire is in intrinsic normative logic, so that it “exhausts historical time, suspends history, and summons the past and future within its own ethical order. In other words, Empire presents its

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<sup>5</sup> George Modelski, “The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20 (1978): 214-235.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Gilpin, “The Theory of Hegemonic War”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18 (1988): 591-613.

<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory”. In *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Taylor. In Christopher Chase-Dunn *et al.*, “Hegemony and Social Change – The Forum”, *Mershon International Studies Review*, 38 (1994): 363-364.

<sup>9</sup> It is a matter of investigation if the issue of collecting and redistributing the resources should be considered as a central feature of an empire. If the answer is no, then it does not fit the definition of the state, in its modern acceptation. The Holy Empire did not do it, but none doubted in its time about being an empire. The best understanding of the fact is offered by the constructivist approach, any given concept having several meanings that appear during the social interactions, and knowing chronological dynamics.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 10.

order as permanent, eternal, and necessary.”<sup>11</sup> For the Euro-centric world, the very model of the unity is the Roman Empire. The memory of its magnificence, civilization and glory mobilized every European imperial project since Antiquity, and each of them tried very hard to present itself as the legitimate Roman heir.

Compared with the imperial order, the hegemonic normative space is significantly less defined, mainly because of the anarchic order it describes, and so are the manifestations of its power. “Compared to empire, hegemony is commonly seen as a shallower and less intrusive mode of control.”<sup>12</sup> Usually lacking a formal responsibility for the domestic politics of the states where it exercises its dominance, the hegemonic power has more freedom in selecting the nature and range of the intervention. But in order to preserve the legitimacy of its predominance (as a “counter-imperial project”), it also has to self-restraint in exercising its power. As Hurrell explains it, “stable hegemony rests on a delicate balance between coercion and consensus, a balance between the exercise of the direct and indirect power by the hegemon on the one hand and the provision of a degree of autonomy of action and a degree of respect for the interests of weaker states on the other.”<sup>13</sup>

By returning now to David Lake’s classification of the hierarchic structures of the international realm, I believe that the first three forms (spheres of influence, protectorates, informal empires) could be considered as belonging to the family of hegemonic dominance. They are ordered according to the range of the involvement of the centre, being expressions of some sort of a soft, a medium and a hard hegemony in material, military terms. I tried to show that the empire is a different kind of dominance, and in what it follows I suggest that the post-imperial order can be seen as some sort of hegemony, but not necessary, only in those cases where the former metropolitan power imposes its own rules to the succeeding states.

In spite of the fact that there are authors convinced that a world-state is inevitable<sup>14</sup> or that empire is an immanent threat toward the freedom of the world’s citizens<sup>15</sup>, empirically one could observe that the fate the empires are facing seems to be their unravel (at least of the political units considered in this paper). It is now the moment to take a closer look to the relations built among the states that follow an empire or, in other words, to identify and investigate a post-imperial order, if possible.

## Empire and post-imperial order

As I have shown, it is the intention of this paper to investigate and conceptualize the features and typology of the post-imperial orders. In this respect, I think that a brief comparative look to the British and, respectively, the Russian Empires could prove to be very fruitful. I am using the plural form when speaking about the Russian empire because I consider it in its both forms, Tsarist and Soviet. By doing so, I shall try to mark either the elements of continuity and specificity of both these two empires governed from Moscow.

There are at least two reasons for choosing them: firstly, they were the very embodiment of two different forms of imperialism, so that I formulate as a first hypotheses that the post-imperial orders that they generate would be quite different; secondly, they were the most powerful players

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<sup>11</sup> Hardt, Negri, *Empire*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order. Power, Values, and the Constituency of International Society* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 262.

<sup>13</sup> Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 270.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Why a World State is Inevitable", *European Journal of International Relations*, 9 (2003): 491-542

<sup>15</sup> Hardt, Negri, *Empire*.

in the imperialist game, and each of them managed, at the climax of their territorial expansion, to control roughly one fifth of the earth, so that the post-imperial orders that they eventually generated represented the widest spread.

The differences between a commercial, sea-born empire, on one hand, and a militaristic land-based on the other are quite known in IR theory. A classical geopolitical approach is visible in Dominic Lieven's commentary:

The contrast between British commercial and Russian military–dynastic empire overlaps with another distinction: the one between maritime and land empire. Since from the sixteenth century to the creation of the railway (and actually in many cases beyond) long-distance trade was far cheaper and quicker by water one reason for the overlap is clear. In the view of many scholars the contrast between maritime and land empire also entails the distinction between a far-flung collection of colonies in the former case, and a polity which is in embryo at least a unified state, and maybe even a potential nation-state. Added together, these contrasts are often summarized as the distinction between liberal, diffuse maritime power on the one hand, and autocratic, centralizing land empire on the other.<sup>16</sup>

Although Lieven's perspective is compelling, there are perhaps of making only two comments to add. First, the logics behind empire-building are quite different: in the British case, it was, for the most part of its history, an individualistic enterprise, where the state came lately into the scene. More or less, it was built on a bottom-up dynamic. For the Russian case, it was mainly a state-guided effort, driven by territorial defense and expansion, so that it can be considered a top-down project.

The diffuse nature of the British Empire outlined by Lieven implies a much larger freedom for the colonies and territories<sup>17</sup> than for the Russian example. Even ideologically, the British Empire envisaged in its late period its natural collapse as the moment when the indigenous people would be able of self-governing. The distinction between colonies and dominions is not only a matter of race, but also one of governmental aptitudes.<sup>18</sup> In the Russian example, the autocracy offered a much harsher political environment, so that the relations between the centre and the subjects can be considered strictly hierarchic.<sup>19</sup>

The second comment concerns the position of the centre inside the empire. Queen Victoria was Empress of India in her capacity of ruler of the United Kingdom, which had a distinct identity inside the empire, preceding, co-existing and succeeding it. Her correspondent in Russia was "Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias". Russia itself (Great Russia, distinct from White Russia – Belarus, and Little Russia – Ukraine) had not a distinct personality. Curiously, in Russian Empire's heir, the Soviet Union, the situation somehow perpetuated, at least at the level of ideological tools.<sup>20</sup> Russia *was* the empire, not (only) its core.

<sup>16</sup> Dominic Lieven, "Empire on Europe's Periphery". In *Imperial Rule*, eds. Alexei Miller, Alfred J. Rieber (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 138.

<sup>17</sup> The histories of relations between London and the "white colonies", but also with the local rulers in India, are eloquent in this respect.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, the discussion of the inter-war period regarding India's capacity for gaining the dominion status.

<sup>19</sup> For a much detailed discussion over the social conditions in the British and, respectively, the Russian empires, see Lieven, "Empire on Europe's Periphery", 141-147.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, all the Soviet republics had their own Communist Party, except for Russia, where the Soviet Union's Communist Party (the "general" one) was acting. At individual level, it is also to note that many political leaders of the Soviet Union were born outside Russia. It is enough to mention in this respect the names of I. V. Stalin, a Georgian, and Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian. Examples as such are indicators for considering that in the Soviet Union the Russian national political identity was to be subsumed to the imperial, Soviet, one.

In these circumstances, Lieven's consideration of the Tsarist Empire as a "potential nation-state" should be considered with caution. This potential nation-state would have needed a nation, but a nation that contained the Russians in a larger political community. The Russians entered in nations' era not only without political instruments of building a "community of will", but, one can speculate, also without a socially relevant idea of imaging a history and a future separated from those of other such political entities.<sup>21</sup>

The Bolshevik Revolution, besides having as an immediate effect the dismantlement of the Tsarist Empire, brought a Marxist ideological dilemma in the issue of imperialism. On the one hand, there should be considered the self-determination right of the proletariat from the ancient exploiter, meaning the right to secession of the proletarians living on alien territories. On the other hand, the nation-state is, from a Marxist point of view, the expression of the interests of the exploiting upper-classes, and so the only legitimate country for the all the proletarians would be the Soviet Union. Eventually, the imperialist project won, and almost all the territories once part of the Tsarist Empire returned by violent means under Moscow's control.

The ideological factor had two important consequences for the imperial identity. Internally, it offered a much more powerful unifying tool in the hands of the political elite of the centre than the autocracy gave. Externally, while the Tsarist Empire was an accepted member of the international society, the Soviet Union, because of its revolutionary character, gained this status only in the eve of the World War II. During the Cold War, the ideology was for the Soviet Union both a form of power, and an impediment in shaping social relations at international level.

The Soviet imperialist ideology was at least twice revised regarding its exclusive sphere of influence, the "external" or "informal" Soviet empire.<sup>22</sup> The first was represented by the moment when Moscow imposed friendly regimes in the satellite countries, in the period following the end of War World II. The second important moment came in the late 1960's, with the Brezhnev Doctrine. I should highlight the fact that the manifestations of projects in the political life should be considered as forms of hegemony. The imperialism is the ideology that made such policies possible, not the practices - a possible political unifying project that never came into fact, simply because the countries in question preserved their sovereignty. The perspective in its ideological dimension was formally ended with the announcement of the Sinatra Doctrine in 1989.

In brief, it can be said that there were some important differences between the British and Russian empires: maritime *versus* land, colonial *versus* territorial, liberal *versus* autocratic/communist, state-core *versus* empire-core, etc. The brief comparative discussion above is not meant to exhaust the topic, but to offer a better understanding on two different kinds of relations that can emerge between the metropolis and its former alien subordinated units after the collapse of the empire. I intend to use this comparison in order to build two ideal-types of the post-imperial orders.

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<sup>21</sup> The above sentence should not be read as there was no Russian nationalism during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but that it can not be compared with its contemporary counterparts in the terms of social relevance and political impact. For a good insight over the issue see, for instance, Alexei Miller, "The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian Nationalism". In *Imperial Rule*, eds. Alexei Miller, Alfred J. Rieber (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2004)

<sup>22</sup> More considerations on this issue could be found, for instance, in Alexander Wendt, Daniel Friedheim, "Hierarchy under Anarchy: Informal Empire and the East German State". In *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, eds. Thomas J. Biersteker, Cynthia Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)..

### The ideal-types of the post-imperial orders

Part of the Weberian intellectual tradition of the Social Sciences, the constructivist approach underlines the importance of the comprehensive perspectives. Intellectual constructs as the ideal- types are meant to clarify the analytic effort of the researcher, even if the situations met in the real social, lacking the purity of the concept, can only approximate one pattern or another.

The main purpose of this paper is to offer a perspective on the involvement of the former imperial powers in their former colonies/ territories for a better understanding of some dramatic contemporary international security issues. I consider that some good answers can be found in the common past that provides special identities and interests.

In my view, these present special relations originating in the imperial past can be grouped in two main forms. In the first one, the attitudes, behaviors and policies of the former imperial power can be seen as designed to fulfill only its interests. The present sovereign states that used to be under its control are considered to be its “natural” backyard – if not in the empire, at least in its sphere of influence. Any external interference, particularly those regarding the hard security, are seen by the decision-makers of the former empire as menacing its influence, and consequently as unfriendly and veritable threats toward the international stability. In the relations established with the new independent states the former metropolis tends to act like a suzerain, and to replace the empire with a form of hegemony, mainly in its military dimension. The imperial dream is somehow still present in the most parts of the political class and inside the society as a whole, who tends to consider that period as the nation’s “golden age”. I name such a relations-complex (involving decision-makers, societies, states and other social actors) a *power-oriented post-imperial order* (POPIO).

In the second case, the former imperial power is somehow “ashamed” by its imperial past, in particular by the excesses, the most intrusive forms of its dominance of the life of its subordinated societies. If nothing can be made in order to remedy the errors of the past, a sentiment of responsibility toward the future of the former colonies becomes widespread in the society. The loss of the empire being accepted, the former imperial power also faces the failure of the claimed legitimate monopoly over the normative space. The imperial values should be replaced only by an even larger set (as the Human Rights doctrine), more universal, less controversial. In such a post-imperial order, the external interference is accepted as long as the interventionist proves itself to be a valid interpreter of the norms. In this *norm-oriented post-imperial order* (NOPIO), the Civilized Other is accepted, desired, invited to observe, interpret and act.

In my view, one major difference between the two ideal-types of post-imperial orders can be seen as similar to those between multilateralism and bilateralism, but at the normative and, more important, the interpretative level. Thus, I extend John Ruggie’s meanings of these terms from those interests and identities embodied in formal agreements<sup>23</sup> to encompass all kind of shared understandings and practices, many of them being visible only in the management of occurring crisis or other moments.

Some additional comments should be made. First, we could say that in a POPIO an empire’s heir is considering itself a “genuine” nation state. The identities of such an actor are those shaped by the structural conditions of a state having to act in an anarchical environment. The new actor is supposed to have the usual interests of a nation-state in a Hobbesian world, where power and self-help are the governing principles of the relationships among sovereign entities. In a NOPIO, the universal project is preserved, but reconsidered – the failure of the normative

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<sup>23</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution”, *International Organization*, 46 (1992): 561-598.

monopoly does not mean that it has to be replaced by an egoistic set of values, but by a larger one, less ideological. The new identity being achieved, the possibility to make mistakes, the acceptance of the social change – all these would shape new interests toward the former colonies and territories.

I should also highlight the fact that these ideal-types refer to post-imperial orders, not actors. It is theoretically possible that the same former imperial power would build/ desire to build a POPIO in certain cases and a NOPIO in others. Such an observation could be considered illogic, or even hypocrisy, for certain theories, but the fact is consistent to the constructivist approach, where every actor knows a particular set of identities and interests, stable but not perennial. Generally speaking, certain stability in pursuing a specific post-imperial order is to be expected from each former imperial power (if we are not in front of a schizophrenic actor), but the exceptions would be not unavoidable. There are two situations, at least, to be noticed when such thing is possible: the evolution of the norms themselves and their socially recognized valid interpretation, on the one hand, and the situations when the actor would risk to act in a manner close to cognitive dissonance, so that it has to choose between becoming the “prisoner” of the norm, or to re-prioritize its identities and interests.

It is also possible to consider the two ideal-types as stages of the same process. Till now, there are too few examples in this field. As I shall discuss later, there are some indicators that one post-imperial order could replace the other. A constructivist perspective of this factor would take into consideration both material and ideational factors, continuous and slow changes of the interests and identities of the agent, and the dynamics of social structures. It should also be said that such process does not necessarily involve something inevitable or irreversible- the social-oriented approach rejects such a perspective. But if such a tendency exists, it should be discovered.

I consider that in the contemporary world the two forms of post-imperial orders coexist and produce social effects. In the next section of this paper I intend to comment some of their most visible manifestations and interactions in international security issues.

### **International security through post-imperial orders**

It is a matter of empirical observations that in the last century the great powers progressively abandoned the imperialist projects and policies, in the conception considered here. Several explanations could be offered here, from the nature of military power (for instance, the significance of the nuclear factor) or the relative decrease of the importance of the territory till to the spreading of nation-state ideology, but it is not my intention to identify and investigate all of them. I want to point out some changes in the political ideas governing the world. Martha Finnemore suggests that, in contemporary politics, “most states do not *want* more territory nor do they see force as an effective or legitimate means of obtaining it. More territory is no longer a marker of state success or state greatness”.<sup>24</sup>

Finnemore’s statement can be best understood in the context of her book. Attached to the constructivist approach, she underlines that the norms governing the international politics are in a permanent and continuous change. The argument is completed by saying that the above changes continuously produce new institutions of the world order, that exercise a structural pressure over all social actors. In my opinion, in a constructivist perspective the institutions and agents should be considered in dynamic co-determination relationship.

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<sup>24</sup> Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention. Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 140; emphasis in original.

The fact that the great powers abandoned the imperialist policies does not mean that there are all considered in the same fashion. The interventions vary greatly in the terms of international support and legitimacy, and asking “why such a thing would happen?” is appropriate.

In domestic politics, the legitimacy of government is conferred by the objects of governing acts. By applying these observations to the international field, the legitimacy of an external intervention would be conferred by the two kinds of subjects involved: those who suffer it and the citizens of the interventionist state, to whom the decision-makers are responsible to. The anarchic nature of the international system – lacking a monopoly in issuing, interpreting and enforcing rules - makes such a judgment insufficient, so that the interventionist looks for some support of interpreting the rules even outside, from other nation states and from an inter-/ transnational public opinion.

#### POPIO

A POPIO could be considered today as the “wrong” way of understanding the international politics, due to the exclusivist claim of a single power to manage all the important matters in a self-designated sphere of influence. For instance, in Western opinion at least, Russia’s treatment of the former Soviet space as her own backyard is usually considered both a threat to the address of international security and obsolete in its norms and practices.<sup>25</sup> Of course, one could say that this interpretation is only a form of the hegemonic power of the West in imposing its judgments on international level<sup>26</sup>. The correctness of this statement or finding a better explanation is not relevant to the aim of the present paper, since the fact that this position produces social effects is more important.

In my view, Russia’s attempts to establish a POPIO are somehow predictable, because of the identity transformations she has suffered in the last twenty years. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union were accompanied by the renouncement to the ideology, the imperial unifying factor. At that moment, Russia faced the imperative of building a state and even a supporting nation as soon as possible. As for her political identity in international relations, Andrei Tsygankov discovered in 1997 at least four different and colliding projects, each of them having its supporters in the political and academic circles: the international institutionalism, the defensive and offensive realism, and the revolutionary expansionism<sup>27</sup>.

Almost a decade later, Andrei Tsygankov considers that it is a mistake to look at Russia as to an imperialist power, but to treat her as a state looking after its own national interests, the Kremlin’s policies being “post-imperial and largely defensive. They seek to pursue opportunities for economic growth and stability and to address remaining security threats”<sup>28</sup>. Russia is using more and more the instruments of soft power, in Tsygankov’s view, designed to project influence, not power, in the former Soviet Union. For Tsygankov, “strengthening Russia’s ties in the former Soviet region does not require revising existing territorial boundaries, depriving neighbors of their political sovereignty, or taking on the burden of an imperial responsibility, successful application

<sup>25</sup> A huge bibliography is dedicated to this subject in recent years. For a short and suggestive description, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Projecting Confidence, Not Fear: Russia’s Post-Imperial Assertiveness”, *Orbis*, 50 (2006), 677-679. An extended investigation over Russia’s foreign policy can be found in Roger E. Kanet (ed.), *Russia – Re-Emerging Great Power* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> On Western normative influence in International Relations see, for instance, Anthony Pagden “Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe’s Imperial Legacy”, *Political Theory*, 31 (2003): 171-199.

<sup>27</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, “From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism”, *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41 (1997): 247-268.

<sup>28</sup> Tsigankov, “Projecting Confidence, Not Fear”, 684.

of soft power weakens the appeal of Russia's traditional imperialists and strengthens security in the region"<sup>29</sup>.

Translating Tsygankov's 2006 analysis in his own 1997 terms suggests that in the last decade the liberal and revolutionary approaches became less influential in Russia, and that now her behavior could be best understood in the terms of some sort of realism. I think that Tsygankov is right in his argument and I shall try to put it in a theoretical manner, which would consider today Russia a unitary nation-state actor pursuing its interests in the anarchic environment in a selfish manner. The analysis is supported by events and processes at both internal and external level. Internally, the two Chechen Wars, for instance, were designed to ensure the rule of the central government over the entire territory of the state – violently affirming the statehood. Externally, the opposition made toward the “colored revolutions” (in Tsygankov's terms) and their political outcomes, to NATO's expansion or the Georgian intervention are all meant to formulate a sphere of exclusive hegemony, not a new empire, or a POPIO in the terms suggested by this paper. Nevertheless, this kind of management the sphere of influence is rejected by Russia's interaction partners as brutal forms of (re)imposing the hegemony. The Georgian crisis in the summer of 2008 is eloquent in this respect. This case also offers a good example for a previous statement I have made that that in a POPIO the hegemon do not accept Others' intervention. It is also to be said that the Others do not consider Russia's norm interpretation as valid (the parallel between the statehood of Kosovo on the one hand and South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the other being rejected).

The above discussion directs me to the next subsequent question, related to the different interpretations of the interventions in weak states. If the military management of international security in a POPIO looks today like a morally condemnable enterprise, one should ask how other interventions can appear as much more desirable. In other words, what makes an intervention made in a NOPIO to be seen as more legitimate than that in a POPIO?

I think that in order to answer this question it is necessary to look closer at the establishment conditions of a NOPIO, and the Western experience in this respect would offer a good insight. For instance, at the end of World War II, the British political elite contemplated both the inevitable march toward independence of some of the most important colonies and territories of the Empire (namely India) and the ambition of being one of the major powers of the world, comparable with the United States and the Soviet Union. The solution was to replace the imperial order with a hegemonic one, so that the British decision-makers made appeal to an older instrument, the Commonwealth, formerly opened only to the Dominions, the “white” part of the empire.

The modern Commonwealth was not the natural successor to the old prewar Commonwealth that had been held together by ties of kith and kin, common ideals, and partnership. This updated version was a Whitehall device to protect old spheres of interest from competing influences, including from the USA, to offer the new members some off-the-shelf international status and prestige, certain benefits in economic, trade and military assistance, and to prevent the spread of communism.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, the United Kingdom faced the harsh pressures of the Cold War and had to renounce at the claims of being comparable with the two giants of the bipolar era. European empires were doomed in the nuclear age, crashed in the superpowers' collision. The threat of the

<sup>29</sup> Tsigankov, “Projecting Confidence, Not Fear”, 686.

<sup>30</sup> Krishnan Srinivasan, “Nobody's Commonwealth? The Commonwealth in Britain's Post-imperial Adjustment”, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 44 (2006), 259.

communist expansion forced the European powers to search for the American security umbrella. As for the American strategy, even if the European colonies could prove important assets in the containment policy (the replacement of the French presence in Indochina after Dien-Bien-Phu, in 1954, by the American one), the post-colonial political identity of the United States was much too strong to sustain such a position for long period of times. The Suez Crisis in 1956 could be considered as the turning point of the United States' policy toward European empires, by deciding not to support them any more. The decolonisation was the major political process that accompanied the Cold War for political reason too, because

“[...] the Americans were coming round to the view that decolonisation was the best way to counter the spread of communist influence, and American pressure thenceforward became a factor in the independence timetable<sup>31</sup>

In brief, one could say that, under the structural combined pressures of both the Cold War conditions and the spread of nationalist ideas, the great European powers had to reformulate their empires, the British experience being accompanied by the similar experience of France, for instance (the Fourth Republic's *Union française* and *Communauté française* of the Fifth Republic). Till now, it seems clear that the British and French Commonwealths could be interpreted as designed to embody the political exclusive sphere of influence of the former imperial powers or, in the terms of the present paper, as POPIOs. The question is how it comes that the POPIOs were transformed in a NOPIO?

#### NOPIO

I think that the fundamental reason of the explanation should be searched in the unique experience of the West in post-World War II era. Even if we consider Western Europe during the Cold War under a common and foreign hegemony, the main instrument of the American military presence in Europe – NATO – was an anarchic one, with decisions taken on consensus, unlike the similar Soviet instrument, the Treaty of Warsaw<sup>32</sup>. At the end of the Cold War period, the West noted that it formed a security community, whose member consider themselves linked together by mutual trust, based on common identities, values, meanings, norms and practices<sup>33</sup>. As for the European part of this security community, right at the end of the Cold War they institutionalized their relations even more, by forming the European Union.

The common identities, values, meanings, practices of the Western security community are, in my view, the very basis of the NOPIO in discussion. The European Union itself contributes to the building of this form of post-imperial order. Firstly, the shared sovereignty of the members is, I believe, conceivable only if a unity project based on common identities and interest, norms and meanings, is taken into consideration.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, this unity project is not exclusive for the Other.

<sup>31</sup> Srinivasan, “Nobody’s Commonwealth?”, p. 262.

<sup>32</sup> Lake, “Beyond Anarchy”.

<sup>33</sup> Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett, “A Framework for the Study of Security Communities”. In *Security Communities*, eds. Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30-37.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that most discussion of a potential future “empire” (post-sovereign institutionalized form of political unity) are considering UN as the most used contemporary example (for instance, Hardt, Negri, *Empire*, 3-8). The sovereignty issue makes, I think, the EU a much more appropriate example. If so, one should also reconsider the imperial model in interpreting the EU. In spite of the common parallel between the EU and the Roman Empire, which is offering the very idea of European unity, I suppose that a more fruitful comparison would be with the Holy Empire. What do I have in mind is the permanent negotiation process among the political units, the relevance of the central power in discussing the empire, and so on. It is also one more element that entitles the comparison, the normative dimension. For the first part of its history at least, in the Holy Empire it was only one hierarchic

The aim of some of the most challenging component of the European project (the foreign and security policies, which directly address the meaning of the sovereign state) is to shape an European position in the international realm without denying the partnership with the United States, but making efforts to ensure that the transatlantic partnership is working, based, in spite of difficulties, on shared principles, meanings and responsibilities<sup>35</sup>. Special cautions are taken in this respect in particular by those EU members that are also NATO members<sup>36</sup>. I should note that the former imperial powers show the most visible interest in establishing an European international presence. I consider that this fact is due to their post-imperial identity, so that these historic responsibilities and interests define the NOPIO.

In my opinion, NOPIO should not be linked to a special international institution, as the EU. The EU independent external force projection has been very limited, in spite of the efforts made, and it should be noticed that the involvement is, till now at least, conceived in co-operation with other organizations such as NATO or UN.<sup>37</sup> This does not mean that the former imperial powers would fail to express their concern about the weak states that used to be under their control. For instance, Italia took initiative in solving the difficult situation of Albania in 1991 and later a UN mission in 1997, and so was France with regard to Lebanon in 2006. The instrument is less important than the objective. Moreover, the organisations established to embody the former selfish POPIO's have been transformed and become part of the NOPIO. It is enough to mention the present Commonwealth of Nations that can be compared only superficially with its ancestor (the *British* one) from the post – World War II period, but not in terms of the values, goals, and practices involved. The examples can continue in this respect, as the similar Francophone organisation, etc.

Domestic political interests should not be neglected when formulating the interventions, as the ones considered above. It is clear that the public opinion and immigrants from the former empire have their role in the crisis management. The public sensibility with regard to this subject and the presence of immigrants are precisely the signs of post-imperial order. What does it make a NOPIO is that the crisis management policies are grounded on responsibility and not on power interests. Multilateralism is also a key element of a NOPIO. Even if the regular allies and friends decide not to contribute to the operations (as the United States refused to interfere in Albania), they are consulted and offer the political support.

The last question I would like to address is the relationship between institutionalization and gaining the status of recognized norm generator and interpreter. In other words, if a post-imperial state like today Russia should become an institutionalized member of the West in order to consider her hegemony closer to a NOPIO than to a POPIO.

In my view, theoretically it is possible such a future evolution. A NOPIO is based on shared values, meanings and practices. In order to consider Russia's interventions legitimate in her former empire, they should be based on the norms and reasons as those of the West, that the Russian

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institution that functioned, a heritage from the Roman imperial unity: the Romano-Catholic Church, the main source for rules and also their main interpreter. In the present-day European Union, all the political processes are to be shaped by the common normative space, having its core outside the negotiated interests, but the common accepted basis – Human Rights doctrine, etc.

<sup>35</sup> Hartmut Mayer "The 'Mutual', 'Shared' and 'Dual' Responsibility of the West: The EU and the US in a Sustainable Transatlantic Alliance". In *A Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs*, eds. Harmut Mayer, Henri Vogt (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Jolyon Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Hanna Ojanen, "The EU's Responsibility for Global Security and Defence" In *A Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs*, eds. Harmut Mayer, Henri Vogt (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

political system could be seen as a democratic one and that the decision-making processes are not indifferent to the positions of domestic public, the subject of the intervention and of the international partners as well. In brief, a post-imperial nation-state, as social actor, should become contemporary in the political ideas and alike in her interests and identities with others in order to be no longer considered the Other. By retracing the already suggested parallel with the security community theory, the institutionalized membership to the West is not required *per se* in order to consider Russia's predominance in her former empire as closer to a NOPIO than to a POPIO, but her observance of the socially recognized legitimate reasons and ways of exercising the influence.

On the other hand, it should be said that very different evolutions could be made possible by the dynamics and mutual influence of material and ideational factors. The very status of great power or the rejection on identity basis of the Western interpretations, domestic or external events, processes, phenomena, agents' actions, etc, could drive to policies of various natures – as, for instance, to preserve the POPIO, to transform it, even to give it up, and so on. In spite of a two-century old dream, the future of the social realm is still beyond the prediction capacities of its observers and interpreters.

## Conclusions

In this paper I tried to show in a constructivist approach that it is possible to consider some military interventions made by the great powers in weak states in the light of their imperial past. In this respect, I differentiated the empire from other forms of political dominance, and the most important element seemed to be the sentiment of unity and common project. When the empires collapsed, each of them generated a post-imperial order, that is to say special links between the metropolis and the sovereign states once under its control as well as special interests and identities.

The next step in the investigation of the post-imperial interventions was to take a closer look to the possible meanings of post-imperial orders. I defined in this respect two ideal forms. The first one, i. e. the *power-oriented post-imperial order*, is defined by the interests of the former political centre of the empire. It considers that the former empire is to be transformed in a sphere of influence of its own, where its special interests should be protected from any external influence, in particular in high politics. On the contrary, a *norm-oriented post-imperial order* is based on a special responsibility of the former imperial power. The interactions are based on the over-sovereign norms governing the social interactions. The external influences are not only allowed, but even desired, as long as the other interventionists are considered valid interpreter of these rules.

In my opinion, these two ideal-types of the post-imperial order could be useful analytical instruments in discussing contemporary international security issues. There are intended to allow the avoidance of misinterpretations of the political projects and ideas behind great powers' interventions in weak states. In empirical situations, these terms can suggest some possible future evolution of the international security problems. Theoretically, some entrenched meanings of important concepts of International Relations are to be reconsidered, such as sovereignty or anarchy. In a constructivist perspective, neither the world, nor the actors' interpretations stop. The continuous social interactions generate new understandings that are to be conceptualized and analyzed, and this is the reason of the above paper.

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