

# The variability of regional powers

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, International Relations (IR) research has seen a resurgence in the study of regions, regional orders and regional powers (Acharya 2007; Acharya and Johnston 2007; Breslin et al. 2002; Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Fawn 2009; Hurrell 2007; Katzenstein 2005). As a result, a debate has emerged about the role of these regions and their core states in the international system and, despite a propensity of realist and neo-realist accounts having been applied to the analysis of the role of regional powers (Fawn 2009: 31), essentially all of the major approaches to the study of IR have contributed elements to this discussion. As such, regional powers have been studied both as facilitators (Cooper and Taylor 2003; Hurrell 2005; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990; Singh 2000) and obstacles to regional (economic) institutionalization (Capling and Nossal 2009; Grieco 1999; Gruber 2000; Kubicek 2009); their role as middle or emerging powers in global governance and international institutions has also been discussed (Narlikar and Tussie 2004; Nolte 2007; Pedersen 2002). Other research has looked at the emergence and maintenance of “regional security complexes” dominated by one state (Adler and Greve 2009; Buzan and Waever 2003; Lake and Morgan 1997).<sup>2</sup>

Among the reasons for this rekindled interest is that the end of the Cold War has arguably created space for regional powers to emerge as key actors who assume important (but currently under-specified and under-studied) roles in questions of regional and global governance. What makes this topic even more interesting is that often trust is put in regional powers, for instance, to take care of conflicts, economic

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a progression of an article that will be published in the *International Studies Review* (2010, 12(4)). Where possible, please cite from this paper, rather than this work in progress.

<sup>2</sup> Some authors have specifically emphasized the utility of synergies between realism, (liberal) institutionalism and constructivism. They point, for instance, to the need for both a focus on the material realities of an asymmetric distribution of capabilities as well as on the meanings given to this predominance both by the regional power itself as well as its regional neighbors and external actors (Fawn 2009; Pedersen 2002).

deprivation and political instabilities in their regions. This has been repeatedly suggested, for instance, by the US State Department; historically, in the Nixon Doctrine of 1969; contemporarily, in the debate about the role of pivotal states or “new emerging markets” in U.S. foreign policy (Bush 2002; Chase et al. 1999). In the case of South Africa after 1994, for instance, the international community, particularly Western donors, hoped that South Africa’s economy could pull along other countries in Southern Africa, and even throughout the continent, as a growth engine. It was also anticipated that South Africa could bring stability, strengthen regional organizations, and take a leading role in solving African conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Similar observations of expectations in the fields of regional stability, the perseverance of the rule of law but also, for instance, in matters of regional integration can be made across the globe. India, for example, has been clearly called upon by the European Parliament and the US Congress to take a more active role in preventing state failure in Nepal after the “royal coup” in February 2005 (European Union 2005; US Government Printing Office 2005; Prys 2009a). Furthermore, it seems that this phenomenon is not limited to the regional powers of the Global South. Australia, for example, has been called to its responsibilities, at least by scholars, for bringing order and stability to some of the failed states of the South Pacific (Dubey 2000; Naidu 2003). At times, these expectations are fulfilled. For instance, Brazil, whose government has actively promoted regional economic and political integration within Latin America, inaugurated a series of South American presidential summits in 2000 and, as another example, has led the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti since 2004 (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006). However, other instances, such as Russia’s apparent attempt to re-establish its hold over Central Asia with its intervention in the conflict between the Georgian Government and the South Ossetian and Abkhazian minorities in August 2008, or India’s lack of interest in co-operating with its international partners in the resolution of the Sri Lanka conflict in 2000 and 2006 (Prys 2009a), have caused much bemusement and disappointment among policy-makers and scholars. South Africa, in particular, has been criticized by external, mostly Western, observers for its “quiet diplomacy” towards President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008, a policy which has been deplored as having prolonged dictatorial rule in this Southern African country (Alden and Schoeman 2003; Freeman 2005).<sup>4</sup>

What we have to ask ourselves, however, first – and this is the central starting point for this research is where our assessment that these regional powers have failed to act as regional powers comes from. My observation in the theoretical literature is that – in absence of conceptual and/or theoretical frameworks that specifically deal with hierarchical power relations at the regional levels – authors fall back to furthest developed accounts of hierarchical relations in international politics in general, when looking at regional powers, and their strategies and effects within regional orders. More concretely, analysts apply, whether implicitly or not, theories or frameworks of thinking, such as the Theory of Hegemonic Stability, that originally have been intentionally articulated at the global level, which is where their assumptions are said to be valid. The problem with this transfer of theories across levels of analysis is that, in contrast to the global hegemon, the United States, regional ‘hegemons’ have to operate within an overarching international system determined by the global distribution of power and by international institutions. In addition to the management of the internal regional order, a differentiation from, as well as an

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<sup>3</sup> In the US National Security Strategy outline of September 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, South Africa was singled out as one of the four states in Africa that ‘have a major impact on their neighborhood’ (Bush 2002). The EU has successfully pushed for a free trade agreement with South Africa and upgraded its bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership in 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy and its various theoretical interpretations have been discussed in more detail (Prys 2009b). A relevant finding of this article is that some of the described bemusement is caused by a mismatch between what some observers *perceive* to be the obligation and, more importantly, the interest of the South African government in upholding democracy and good governance in its immediate neighborhood and the actual drivers of South Africa’s regional policy in this instance, which can rather be identified as generating regional solidarity and the avoidance of a spill-over of destabilizing tendencies from Zimbabwe to the rest of Southern Africa.

accommodation within, the international environment has to be established, which potentially alters expected regional dynamics and which could put limits on the level of possible control or influence by the regionally-preponderant state. This is important at the theoretical level; or, in other words, when we make theoretical statements, develop hypotheses that involve in some form or the other regional powers, their strategies or behaviours, we need to pay attention to the specifically regional aspects that might be significant<sup>5</sup>.

In sum, when it comes to regional powers, our empirical observations challenge some central assumptions that arise from both the empirical and the theoretical literature on regional powers, in two ways. First, the presence of a materially preponderant power does not necessarily lead to some form of “hegemonic” behavior or outcomes, such as public good provision or a relative absence of conflict (Buzan and Waever 2003; Lemke 2002). Second, regional powers, consequently, cannot be treated as actors that, *ceteris paribus*, behave in a uniform manner and the actual behavior of these “regional powers” thus shows variation that has so far been neither properly understood nor conceptualized. As always, there are exceptions to this rule as, more recently, some authors have attempted to specifically address the issue of variance in regional orders, which, obviously, also has implications for the most powerful states within these orders. Thomas Pedersen, for instance, has looked into the choice of “strategies” by so-called “regional big powers” and its effect on the formation of regional institutions (Pedersen 2002; Adler und Greve 2009). The “variation in the ordering principle of international relations” across regions is also a central theme of David A. Lake’s more recent publications on global and regional hierarchies (Lake 2009a; 2009b; 2007).<sup>6</sup> This article also centers on variance in regional orders. It shares with authors like Lake and Pedersen the general assumption that regional powerhood comes in different forms and with different features.<sup>7</sup> It, however, argues that the concepts and theories currently used in the relevant literature do little in terms of helping to actually distinguish between different types of regional powers; three main critiques are raised.

The first issue that can be raised is in regard to the conceptual and theoretical tools applied. The empirical literature operates with a multiplicity of often poorly-defined concepts, such as “anchor states”, “emerging middle powers”, “regional leaders” or “regional big powers” (Makoa 2001; Pedersen 2002; Schoeman 2003; Stamm 2004), being applied to essentially the same group of states: Brazil, China, India, South Africa (and, occasionally, a few others). This has led to the overcrowding of the conceptual space and a growing amount of scattered literature that lacks integration into a potentially flourishing field of study. The usage of these terms does not follow any particular or standardized rules and little thought has been given to indicators or distinctive criteria for when a state is a regional leader, a regional hegemon or an anchor state, thereby largely preventing meaningful comparison. While concepts, in particular when related to power, will always be contested, this does not justify the approach that many scholars seem to have applied to terms such as “hegemony”, which suggests that we can “recognize

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<sup>5</sup> It does not mean, however, that we necessarily have to develop entirely new theories with new mechanisms, factors and so forth, but that we have consider “regionality” as an important and decisive mediating factor that influences our existing knowledge on hierarchial relationships.

<sup>6</sup> Overall, despite a growing empirical literature on these and related issues, theories and analytical frameworks that are specifically tied to the regional level of analysis are in short supply. Plentiful analyses exist about, for instance, the formation of global alliances by large nations from the South in response to US hegemony (Alden and Vieira 2005; Antkiewicz and Whalley 2006; Cooper and Fues 2007; Villares 2006). While these give important insights into some of the developments at the level of the international system, they largely focus on systemic determinants, without genuine consideration about the “actual and potential strategies and options” (Hurrell 2006a: 5) of these states, particularly at the regional level.

<sup>7</sup> Pedersen’s concept of co-operative hegemony is, for instance, “attentive to constraints that geopolitics and the international system impose upon states”, but nevertheless “accords state leaders a considerable choice of freedom when it comes to devising strategies” (2002: 683).

hegemony when we see it". The imprecise use of terms is also a problem in the literature that aspires to make a theoretical contribution (Pedersen 2002, Buzan and Waever 2003). A central point and motivation for this article is thus the dissatisfaction with the terminology and concepts hitherto used in the analysis and debate.

A second core criticism of the existent literature on regional powers is that most authors propose taking into account any specificities of the regional level of analysis; yet, in practice, as indicated above, they apply analytical frameworks that were originally developed for scrutinizing global level phenomena, which, admittedly, in absence of specifically regional theories, often seems to be the most straightforward way of proceeding.<sup>8</sup> Assumptions about the link between preponderant power and the provision of order and stability that are derived from theories of *global* hegemony thus serve as a good illustration for the challenges arising from this level of analysis problem.<sup>9</sup> In analogy to global-level theorizing it is thus often taken for granted that material power preponderance within a region automatically leads to the assumption of this kind of hegemonic role.<sup>10</sup> To repeat, this can explain why regional powers traditionally have been expected to "act hegemonically" and "take care of their own backyard", provide stability and peace within their geographically defined spheres of influence and also why they have appeared to fail to do so. Indeed, empirical studies in fact often come to the conclusion that states described in terms of one of these categories generally appear less powerful than their factual material preponderance might suggest: they do not provide public goods, such as order and stability, nor do they have an extraordinary impact on the behavior of other states in their region (Kagwanja 2006; Muni 2005). In the absence of both clear conceptual tools and comparative studies of regional powers, it has, however, largely been overlooked that the criticized under-performances are in fact a pattern common to most, if not all, of these states.

As a third point of critique, this article argues that much of the literature dealing explicitly with regional powers focuses rather narrowly on the effects of the presence of a regional power on regional institutionalization, which remains a largely Western European phenomenon (Ravenhill 2009; Kubicek

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<sup>8</sup> Similar criticisms have been raised, for instance, by Alagappa who argues that "in the absence of new overarching and overriding global-level security dynamics, domestic, bilateral and regional dynamics have become more salient and have to be addressed *in their own terms*" (emphasis by author, Alagappa 1995: 359; cited from Fawn 2009: 15). Also Katzenstein (2005) and Buzan and Waever (2003) make the case for the region as "a level of analysis distinct from the international". David A Lake's article in the RIS Special Issue is illustrative with regard to the inherent US bias of many analyses of regional powers. Despite emphasizing the specifics of regional orders, his examples, and the empirical test that he carries out, refer to the US and its "hierarchical relationship" with specific regions of the world, rather than to intra-regional dynamics. As such, the latter is not captured in his interesting framework and, at least in the way his model has been presented, this neglects the fact that regions have an independent existence of the US and have their own internal hierarchizations, which may have important effects, particularly on the smaller states within regions. To a state like Bangladesh, India is clearly the important player in its entire foreign policy strategy. It is somewhat puzzling that this "spatial" dynamic, which has so many possible implications and ramifications, is so frequently ignored in studies of regional powers.

<sup>9</sup> There are, obviously, studies that do differentiate between "the regional" and "the global", for instance, with regard to the impact and limitations that the global power hierarchy might have for regional powers and orders (cf. Katzenstein 2005, Buzan and Waever 2003). This article argues, however, that even this perspective is incomplete, and omits what is defined in this article as the "inside-out" perspective. This will be identified, in due course, as the impact of the regional powers' potential for global action or a foreign policy that is largely targeted at the global or at least extra-regional level of international politics, which has, for instance, an important effect on how regional powers see themselves and how they, consequently, use their power.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, the analysis of Landsberg and Adekeye of the influence of South Africa and Nigeria in Africa (Adebajo and Landsberg 2003), as well as Emmers' account of Indonesia and Vietnam (Emmers 2005). The debate at the global level, in particular, about the question of whether mere material preponderance suffices for the United States to act as a hegemon seems to be further progressed with regard to discussions of, for instance, the necessary "strategic restraint" (Ikenberry 2001; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990) of the global hegemon. These discussions have not necessarily trickled down to the regional level.

2009; Capling and Nossal 2009; le Pere and Tjonneland 2005; Nathan 2004). This “Western” or “European” bias has been criticized, for instance, by Buzan and Waever who have instead focused on securitization, but also by some more recent writing on regions and region-building that argues that within a “regional space” different levels of “regionness” can develop. This includes the development of a common identity (leading to a regional society or even regional community), as well as less benign or co-operative types of regional orders, which might be characterized by conflict and mutual aggression (Hettne and Söderbaum 2002: 39). This paper aligns itself with this understanding of regions, even if the definition of a region in itself can, at a fundamental level, and needs to be looked upon from a more critical stance that looks beyond a standpoint that takes the existence of regions and regional powers as a given. While this cannot be given the necessary attention within this paper, in short, the identification of regional powers is taken to be partly a matter of material ‘facts’, and partly to be a matter of a process of self-identification, as well as identification by ‘Others’; that is, both external and internal actors.<sup>11</sup> The analytical framework developed here embraces the possibility that the contribution by regional powers to the regional and global order are neither always positive nor always negative, but also can be “indifferent” or “insignificant” as well. Further, much of the literature on regional powers indeed discusses these states within the limited realm of “regional integration” (Fawn 2009, Mattli 1999, Pedersen 2002) and focuses on whether regional co-operation may or may not need a powerful leader. The variation in regional power strategy is thus treated as an independent variable, whereas this article takes one step back and looks at regional powers as an analytical category; the effects of the variation in types and the related “strategies” is hopefully what can follow from this research.

In sum, the suggestion of an analytical framework or typology to study these states that explicitly play an important role within regional order and, by extension also the global order, is, therefore, at the heart of this article. Building on the assumption that we need to begin to deliberately think about the concept of a regional power as a variable that can take on different forms and values, distinct categories will be developed that help to distinguish clearly between types of regional powers. This framework contributes in two key ways to the study of regional powers, at the conceptual level. First, using “regional power” as the umbrella term, a scheme of three ideal-types variants of regional powerhood, “regional detached powers”, “regional hegemons” and “regional dominators”, is developed. To this end, Gary Goertz’ suggestions about *Social Science Concepts* (2006) will be used and adapted to conceptualize these three types in a way that corresponds with an actual observable variance in their foreign policy, as well as the effects that these states have, for instance, on the degree of political stability or economic development in the region as a whole. Among the core aspects of Goertz’ proposed method is the setting of clear boundaries between a concept and its conceptual neighborhood, and the definition of both the constitutive dimensions and the indicators of the concept in a way that helps with differentiation from related concepts, both theoretically and in their empirical application.

In practice, this means that the subsequent sections of this article focus on an in-depth discussion and conceptualization of the concept of regional hegemony, from which the other two forms of regional powerhood are then distinguished. The reason for choosing hegemony as the focal point of this article is that, despite its weaknesses and contestations, hegemony is an extremely important concept that, if correctly applied, can capture important aspects both of what regional powers do and how they effective they are at doing it. For these reasons, it provides an important conceptual anchor for the tasks at hand. As an accurate and usable typology builds on a clear-cut differentiation between its various

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<sup>11</sup> One could argue that the book’s meta-theoretical foundation is closest to ‘Scientific Realism’. The concept of ‘regional power’ is, in this regard, not the outcome of an empirical analysis, but the starting point for a theory-building exercise.

categories, the conceptualization of regional hegemony will further allow the deduction of knowledge about other forms of regional power relations.

Hegemony, initially, is defined as a “political order (whether global or regional) in which the hegemon’s mode of thinking becomes dominant without a regular reference to violence” (adapted from Showstack Sassoon 1982: 94). This definition represents largely a consensus view among the different approaches to hegemony, yet, similar to other conceptualizations, it is not amenable to direct empirical application. This is because it lacks clear indicators, as well as an elucidation of what the factors might be that contribute to the transformation of a (regional) power into a (regional) hegemon. This article will attempt to rectify these shortcomings by being explicit about both the constitutive dimensions and the indicators of regional hegemony, as understood in this article. As noted above, this procedure stands to contrast, and add value to, a literature that is scattered with a multiplicity of poorly-defined concepts such as “anchor states”, “emerging middle powers”, or “regional leaders”. The usage of such terms does not follow any particular rules, and little thought is given to indicators or distinctive criteria for when a state is a regional leader or an anchor state, nor what this actually means for regional strategies and outcomes.

The second main contribution of the analytical framework introduced here is that it explicitly deals with the fact that regions are *per se* open systems, which are thus vulnerable to external impacts and whose component units can interact with their external environment in a variety of ways. This “regional openness”, arguably, impacts on the type of role a regionally preponderant state assumes.<sup>12</sup> In other words, it captures the significance of the fact that hegemony (or powerhood in general) takes place at a regional level, rather than at the global level of international politics. While, obviously, the issue of domestic regime type, for instance, is another potentially important determinant of how a regional power deals with its accentuated position, the factor of “openness”, has, in several respects, received too little attention in the existing literature. It will be shown that the inclusion of such a factor can rectify the problems stated above and provide at least a partial solution to the “expectations-achievement gap” that is so prevalent in our analyses of regional powers. While this article, therefore, clearly has as its focus the development of a meaningful typology of regional powers, and, in particular, the development of regional hegemony as a useful concept to employ in empirical and theoretical studies, it will go beyond this and give an indication of one conditional variable that impacts on how states will relate both to their region and to global level politics.

In sum, by suggesting a three-pronged typology of regional powerhood, this article will propose how the universe of cases, regional powers across time and space, can be defined and ordered; this, in turn, will allow for more nuanced theories at the sub-systemic level. This deliberate inclusion of variation will, first, allow for more systemic comparisons of foreign policies, actual influence and, for example, acceptance and legitimacy of these states on a regional and global level. Second, when used as independent variable, different power roles can be linked with distinctive impacts, for example, on regional orders, peace and stability, and hence questions, for instance about the conditions under which regional powers can become global powers, can be tackled in a more sophisticated manner. The following sections will, first, describe the potential universe of regional powers that could fall under the conceptual scheme put forward here. Second, the analytical means by which to differentiate between different types of regional powers will be proposed. Furthermore, some empirical implications of this new approach will be briefly

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<sup>12</sup> The author thanks an anonymous reviewer for his or her suggestions made about the terminology used here. Katzenstein, for instance, uses the term “porous” to describe this characteristic of regions (Katzenstein 2005). What is important here, and what differentiates this article from work such as Katzenstein’s, is that it conceptualizes this “porousness” as a two-way street rather than limiting it to the effect of global powers on regional orders.

presented in the conclusion, in order to highlight the benefit of undertaking the study of regional powers in the ways suggested.

### THE UNIVERSE OF CASES: IDENTIFYING REGIONAL POWERS

In contrast to much of the existing literature, this paper takes a deliberately explicit approach to terminology and conceptualizations. On a basic conceptual level, regional power is treated as the umbrella term, or *hyperonym*, that encompasses the entire population of states being studied, which, in turn, means, for example, that regional hegemony could be a potential value if regional power is treated as a dependent variable. Two core assets parsimoniously define all regional powers – their geographical position within a region and their relative preponderance within that region in terms of material capabilities (Lemke 2008). This application of an approach to power as the rather simple control-over-resources is justified in this initial step of mapping out all relevant protagonists. The question of whether or not any leadership or other roles are fulfilled by this state is not asked at this point and no further assumptions are made about what any hard power capabilities mean for the actual foreign policies, or the relations between states, in the region. The focus on relative preponderance rather than absolute strength is important, first, because of the large differences between the material capabilities of regional powers across the globe, and, second, because it is this relative preponderance over neighboring states that matters in regional relations.

In the absence of any concretely-defined criteria for the identification of the world's regions, this paper uses a pragmatic working definition, which combines elements of geopolitical, behavioral and constructivist approaches.<sup>13</sup> A region, from this perspective, consists of two or more member states in geographical proximity, is characterized by regular interactions between them and is perceived by both internal and external actors as a distinct regional space. At the same time, the political contingency of the delineation of regions is acknowledged, which means that conscious political action could alter the definition of any specific region.<sup>14</sup>

Agreement is thus reached with such authors as Ayoob, Hettne and Söderbaum and Hurrell, who argue that, while theoretical and conceptual parsimony is desirable in principal, a more eclectic or staged approach to regions yields the best results for the nurture of our understanding of what regions actually are (Ayoob 1999: 111ff.; Hettne and Söderbaum 2002: 39ff.; Hurrell 1995: 73). While, hence, the territorial foundation of regions (described as regional space or potential regions) is taken for granted, within these spaces, the form of interaction is politically contingent and both positive and negative results in terms of peace and stability, economic co-operation or transnational activities are to be expected (Hettne and Söderbaum 2002: 39).<sup>15</sup> In other words, actors potentially have several regional

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<sup>13</sup> It is vital for any debate linked to regions to be terminologically rigid as the concept of "region" alone is contested across and within disciplines. Geographers typically conceptualize a region as a substate-entity. Others associate regions with transboundary projects. In International Relations even entire continents have been designated as a region. While none of these understandings is incorrect, this divergence necessitates at least a very clear statement in each study as to what exactly the author is referring to, rather than the wide-spread approach of "we know a region when we see one" (Fawn 2009: 12).

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Paasi's description of regions as consisting of "material and virtual elements", as well as "social practices and discourses" (2009: 131).

<sup>15</sup> This means that the notion of a "non-territorial" region is rejected. Regional relations – in geographic terms – are potentially very different to those relations in other, purpose-built institutions or alliances. Regional neighbors, first, cannot be chosen, while the connections in these so-called non-geographical regions are deliberately constructed with a political or economic purpose in mind and, hence, are automatically geared towards co-operative and harmonious relations. Second, in most areas of the world, regional neighbors are still considered to be among the

narratives to choose from; hence, the importance of conscious political action for the construction and the de-construction of a region is stressed, which, in turn, describes one of the many foreign policy options potentially available to a regional power.

Despite disagreements about the measurement and conceptualization of both preponderant material resources and regions, Douglas Lemke, in a study of 2008 that compared Correlates of War (COW) Regions, with his own “War and Peace” Regions (Lemke 2002), as well as the regions defined by the Regional Powers Network (RPN), has found that the number and identity of regional powers, are “remarkably consistent regardless of how regions are defined and measured” (Lemke 2008: 5). For the purpose of conciseness, and to avoid unnecessary duplications, it seems, therefore, well founded to make use of Lemke’s findings about the general common denominators in regard to the population of regional powers. Indeed, most available power indices rely on a combination of measures including the Gross National Product (GNP), at times supplemented with demographic and military measures.<sup>16</sup> This means for contemporary cases, for instance, that Brazil, China, India, Nigeria, Russia and South Africa are designated as regional powers, sometimes complemented by Australia, Germany, and Iran, and, occasionally, a few others, more contentious ones, such as Israel or Venezuela (Nolte 2007: 9; Pastor 1999: 5).

All of these countries, through their material resources, can make crucial contributions to the construction, and deconstruction, of regional orders and, thereby, to international peace and stability as a whole.<sup>17</sup> At least some of these states have ambitions to expand their influence globally, and, India and China for instance, have done so quite successfully. The link between their regional role and their global ambitions is an interesting topic; yet, while “(t)here is something intuitively logical about the idea that regional preponderance should represent an important element of any claim to major power states” (Hurrell 2006: 8), there are hardly any satisfying answers to-date as to whether great powerhood needs regional representation. There are, however, empirical clues for a nexus between regional and global imperatives in the determination of a regional power’s foreign policy choices, which is why regional openness is seen as a crucial element in an improved conceptualization of all forms of regional powerhood.

### **THREE TYPES OF REGIONAL POWERS: REGIONAL HEGEMONY AND ITS TWO “NEGATIVE POLES”**

The following sections will establish distinct categories into which different regional powers can be sorted and that, at the same time, leave enough scope and flexibility to be applicable to states across time and space. At first, therefore, the article develops a clearer sense of the terminological and conceptual boundaries between the notion of regional hegemony itself and its “negative poles”, or opposites. The focus on what regional hegemony “is not” will provide crucial information about its conceptual neighborhood, and, hence, other clearly differentiable forms of regional powerhood (Goertz 2006: 5). This differentiation is reflected at the terminological level, as well as at the secondary level, of the constitutive features that specify the concepts further and at the indicator level that determines the

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most virulent threats to the regional power’s own territorial integrity, economic and political stability and national identity (as quite clearly shown in South Asia, for example). The extension of the notion of a region to non-geographical alliances is, thus, clearly influenced by a Euro- or even EU-centric understanding of the term, as it is (almost) only here that only little or no reciprocal vulnerability and threat exists within the immediate neighborhood. Yet, this is rather the exception than the rule.

<sup>16</sup> See Lemke (2008) for a more comprehensive treatment of different indices and measures.

<sup>17</sup> Yet, obviously economic or military leverage, and this is one of the main points this article attempts to make, not equivalent to political influence or dominion.

observable characteristics and, hence, the classification of the behavior and foreign relations of these states in empirical studies (Goertz 2006: 59). In order to avoid unnecessary duplication and conceptual re-inventions, the first and second steps of this re-conceptualization build out of existing hegemony theories.<sup>18</sup> The fallacies of other conceptualizations of regional powers will further be avoided by paying specific attention to the impact of the regionality of hegemony, or, in other words, the openness of regions within the wider international system. This means, on the one hand, to contextualize the differences between regional and global public goods that a hegemon at the respective level is expected to provide, and, on the other, it calls for the discussion of this openness as a conditioning factor for the specific regional and global strategies adopted by a regionally preponderant state. By doing so, a much more elaborate picture of the regional and global determinants of the foreign policies of these states, and, as an extension of that, their impact on regional orders, can be drawn.

An analysis of six central approaches in IR research – neo-realism, the Theory of Hegemonic Stability, long-cycle theories, world-system approaches, neo-Gramscianism and liberal hegemony theories – that have dealt with the phenomenon of hegemony revealed that all of them share a broad, common notion of the material basis of hegemony.<sup>19</sup> Yet, what they perceive as the central characteristic and defining or constitutive dimensions of what makes hegemony, and, by extension what they classify as negative poles to hegemony, are essentially contested. Neo-realism and world-system theories can be grouped together as approaches that see hegemony as a direct consequence of an asymmetrical distribution of power. In this case, the negative pole of hegemony would simply be “no power”. Their materialist understanding of power as power over resources is structurally deterministic, and does not allow for a differentiation between dissimilar forms in the exercise of power or, for that matter, for different forms of power - be it soft, persuasive or structural.

The approach developed here will, therefore, build on a synthesis of the other four approaches, in which hegemony is linked to at least some conscious decision-making and a more fluid view of power. Their usefulness to a conceptualization of regional power as a variable becomes clear when we look at the negative poles that, rather than referring to situations of powerlessness, are both functions of predominant power that are differentiable from regional hegemony.<sup>20</sup> Table 1 gives an overview of both

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<sup>18</sup> This means that, in principle, this first part of the conceptual re-formulation in this article is also applicable to global or any other form of hegemony.

<sup>19</sup> For this analysis a set of representative authors and texts have been selected and scrutinized for information on several core questions: (1) What is the negative pole or negative case of hegemony in the different theories? (2) What are the constitutive features of hegemony that are relevant for the causal properties of the concept? (3) What is the scope of the concept of hegemony? Is it global or can it also be used at the region level? This analysis has then been summarized and its core findings are displayed in Table 1. The full text of this analysis is available in (Prys 2008).

<sup>20</sup> As hegemony is understood to be a specific subset of power and power relations between states, the analysis of how the central paradigms in IR theory have defined hegemony also, necessarily, reflects upon the different ways they have approached power itself. The different theoretical paradigms indeed largely build on the most important conceptualizations of power: realism largely focuses on an understanding of power as control over resources (Waltz 1979), liberalism holds a broader notion of power that includes what is typically labeled as “soft power” (Nye 1990, 2004), and Neo-Gramscian approaches focus on less tangible forms of power, such as control over knowledge, as well as the preferences and desires of subordinated actors (Cox 1996). In this research, as elements of all of these different schools are considered necessary to make valid contributions to our understanding of hegemony, a multi-dimensional understanding of power is favored (Baldwin 2002: 178): Hard power capabilities are considered a necessary element of hegemony, and, hence, are treated as an anterior condition for hegemony to exist in the first place. The relational aspects of power are considered by looking at the perceptions of regional states; further, the notion of soft power is inherent in the analysis of the ability and success of the regional hegemon to project its preferences and values. Even the non-traditional formulations of power are employed, for example by looking at the way regional hegemons can exert power through institutions. Underlying this rather eclectic approach is, nevertheless, the traditional relational concept of power defined as ‘A causing B to do something that B otherwise would not have done’ (Baldwin 2002: 177; quoting from Dahl 1957). In agreement with Baldwin, it is argued here that,

constitutive factors as well as the deduced negative poles of each of the analyzed approaches. In this study, it is argued that two of the identified negative poles, a “lack of control” and “domination”, need to be taken into account if our aim is to get an accurate picture about the hegemonic mode of exercising power. On the one hand, hegemony is contrasted with orders or relations in which domination and coercion prevails, on the other, it is also different from orders or relations in which the regional power is either indifferent or unable to ‘get its way’ most of the time.

**Table 1: Constitutive Factors of Hegemony**

	<b>Neo-realism</b>	<b>THS</b>	<b>Long-Cycle Theory</b>
<b>Constitutive Factors</b>	Material (military) preponderance	Material (economic) preponderance as basis for conscious decision, provision of public goods and followership	Material preponderance as qualification, political regime, economic lead, democratic society as catalysts
<b>Negative Pole</b>	No power	Lack of control and force/domination	Lack of control
	<b>World-System</b>	<b>Neo-Gramscianism</b>	<b>Liberal Approaches</b>
<b>Constitutive Factors</b>	Material (economic) preponderance	Material (economic) preponderance, socialization, institutions	Material preponderance, order determined by political system and preferences of the hegemon
<b>Negative Pole</b>	No Power	Challenged social order, “non-consensus”, force	Lack of control

This finding about the duality of negative poles is the basis for the three-pronged approach to regional powerhood introduced above. At the one extreme, we have “regional dominators”: A clear characteristic of domination is its one-sidedness. The state at a centre of such a constellation, the regional dominator, commands and extracts involuntary tributes from the secondary states under a constant threat of force.<sup>21</sup> A hegemon, in contrast, carries most of the burdens in the region, and, at most, collects contributions from the secondary states, which are mostly used for the production of common goods. Furthermore, dominating or imperialistic states directly infringe on the external and internal sovereignty of other states, whereas a hegemon, in the ideal case, refrains from doing so (Doyle 1986: 12). On the other end of the continuum, we can find “detached regional powers”, induced either by insufficient

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despite the developments in power analysis, this basic understanding does not need to be altered as “A can cause B to do something the B would otherwise not do by affecting B’s preferences, desires and thoughts” (Baldwin 2002: 179). Indeed, any understanding of hegemony, either implicitly or explicitly, relies on this definition of power, as research that employs this term is fundamentally interested in how ‘powerful states extract obedience from the less powerful ones’ (MacDonald and Lake 2008: 176).

<sup>21</sup> The term “secondary state” is introduced here as a simplification to refer to all states within a region other than the “primary” state, in our case, the regional power no matter what type of regional power we actually have in front of us.

resources or, for instance, by a lack of identification with the region. Such an actor will focus largely on domestic and/or on global politics, instead of on its regional role. The three ideal-types of regional powerhood thus capture a fairly complete spectrum of different roles a regional power can play.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, they only represent the cornerstones of a broad continuum of possible relations and regional powers could, under divergent circumstances, show elements of all three possible behaviors. This perspective aligns itself with a long tradition, particularly in the English School, of looking at systemic power relations as a continuum between empires, on the one hand, and the independence of units on the other, with hegemony lying in between (Buzan 1993: 342; Watson 1992: 13ff.). What remains to be determined, therefore, is the more specific content of each of the terms; namely, how we can identify states and sort them into one of these categories. Further, this article will at least begin to ponder some of the crucial causal links that help explain why a state opts for any of the defined roles. For the suggested understanding of hegemony this means that, at a basic level, it is an outflow of relative superior material power – in terms of economy and military might – on the global level of international politics or, regionally, in a geographically limited area of the world. Yet, to be a hegemon a state further needs to adopt specific foreign political strategies and behaviors that set it apart from domination and detachment. Whether or not a regional power assumes a hegemonic role, in this understanding, is not systemically pre-determined, but other factors, such as domestic factors, self-perceptions, identity and rhetoric as well as different regional and global constraints, must play a fundamental role in shaping the regional power's foreign policy options.

For the concept-building task undertaken here this means that the differentiation between the three ideal-forms of regional powers needs to be reflected in the choice of constitutive dimensions that we associate with regional hegemony. This implies that we need to identify those factors that, first, help determine what kind of role a systematically preponderant state plays within its sphere of influence. To achieve sufficient parsimony, focus, second, should be placed on the ones that play a key role in the causal hypotheses, explanations and mechanisms that are associated with regional powerhood, such as whether a region is stable, whether and how regional conflicts are solved or mediated and whether or not regional economic co-operation has been successful (Goertz 2006: 51ff.).

The dimensions that best fulfill these two criteria are, first, the relevant state's self-perception, second, perceptions by others, third, the provision of public goods, and fourth, the projection of the power's values and interests onto secondary states. For instance, the provision of public goods is generally seen as a constitutive element of hegemony, as it is directly linked to the hypothesized stability of orders in which a hegemonic state is present (cf. Modelski 1987). These four factors are necessary and, in combination with the anterior condition of material preponderance, jointly sufficient for being constitutive of hegemony (whether regional or global or any other form). The following section will also discuss the indicator level for the concept of regional hegemony, which will make its constitutive elements visible to empirical observation.

### **Self-perceptions**

Liberal and other theories of hegemony assume that predominant powers that have the capacity to assume a hegemonic role have at least a limited choice about how they deal with their material power advantage (Wish 1980: 536). Very often, these approaches draw upon the notion of political willingness. This, however, is less suited for developing an empirically observable notion of hegemony in general, and

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<sup>22</sup> At this level of abstraction, this obviously also applies, in principle, to the global level and the relations of power between the United States and the rest of the world.

regional hegemony in specific. This is because it, first, is very difficult to observe empirically. Secondly, it implies that it should be taken for granted that an aspiring hegemon, by definition, needs to make a conscious and deliberate decision for the assumption of this role. This, in turn, forecloses the possibility that, for instance, a regional power might be pushed and/or pulled into assuming a hegemonic role, despite, for instance, having more explicit ambitions at the global level of international politics.

Instead, this cognitive aspect of hegemony is approached through the idea of specific national role conceptions<sup>23</sup>, or the policymakers' "own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform in the international system or in subordinate regional systems" (Holsti 1987: 12). This means that the actual position assumed, and relations formed, are at least partially reflected in the specific self-conceptions or identity of each state, or in what kind of role it foresees for itself at both the regional and the global level; this is why self-perceptions are considered here as a constitutive element of regional hegemony. The analytical value of role conceptions is that they link agency and structure by indicating that state behavior is purposeful and deliberate, while at the same time recognizing that it is shaped by the structural, historical or institutional contexts in the international and domestic milieus (Hollis and Smith 1990: 168). This is an insight that offers a crucial foundation for the comparison between different regional powers whose behavior is shaped notably by the distribution of power within their sphere of influence, while, nevertheless, they remain able to choose the ways in which they act upon these determinants.

In terms of the specific perceptions expected from a hegemon, rather than from any other type of regional power, we can make use of an existing list of indicators. Holsti determined that states or governments categorized as "regional leaders" regularly refer to the "duties or special responsibilities" that they perceive for themselves in their "relation to states in a particular region with which [they] identif[y]" (Holsti 1970: 261).<sup>24</sup> On the indicator level, hence, a sense of "exceptionalism" and, derived from that, the regional powers' awareness of their own outstanding position in the region, are used to define the first constitutive and necessary, even if not individually sufficient, element of regional hegemony (Schlickemaier 2009).<sup>25</sup> Exceptionalism is, in analogy to a frequently-described American foreign policy posture, expressed in the rhetoric of "god-given rights and duties" and a perceived stature as a "city on the hill", or, in other words, in a self-description as a model for neighbors and followers

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion on the relationship between identity, belief systems, role conceptions and foreign policy see (Aggestam 1999; Goldstein and Keohane 1993). In a nutshell, collective identities or roles serve as a system for orientation and for self-reference and action. Identity is also described as a "road map" for foreign policy action.

<sup>24</sup> As an illustration, Holsti gives the following examples that would classify a state as regional leader: "We consider this signal honor (the location of the O.A.U. headquarters in Addis Ababa) both a recognition of Ethiopia's glorious history as a proud and free nation, as well as a challenge to the continuation of her present role of dignified leadership in the new history of the continent" (Haile Selassie speech from the Throne, opening Houses of Parliament, November 2, 1964). And: "Egypt has a special role in the issue ... of joint Arab action. It is up to Egypt more than the other Arab states to come forward with a suitable formula (for Arab unity and against Israel). Egypt, perhaps alone, is required to make an accurate assessment (of conditions in the region) (...) This special role assigned to Egypt is indeed a special responsibility which Egypt must accept" (Voice of Arabs radio broadcast, January 22, 1968). An example for the manifestation of the typical self-perceptions of a "dominator" is the so-called "Monroeski Doctrine" (Kubicek 2009: 242, citing Andrank Migranian, a Putin adviser, in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 4 August 1992) with which the claim was made that the CIS was Russia's sphere of influence. It also provides an explanation for Russia's sense of entitlement with regard to protecting the rights of ethnic Russians in the states located within its sovereign neighboring states.

<sup>25</sup> Similar to this article, Schlickemaier argues that governmental elites of powerful states (or great powers) have various narratives or roles to choose from. This can determine what kind of role a state plays in the global scene. Material preponderance hence can be interpreted in different ways by both the power itself as well as by those within its environment.

(Lipset 1996: 18). This is particularly the case in comparison to other states from both within and outside the region. A crucial step in empirical analyses would therefore be to specifically look for “discourses of difference” exposed in interviews and official statements as well as for an indication of what regional roles these regional powers foresee for other actors.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the regional power’s vision of regional order and, more specifically, their own role within it, are key indicators that need to be taken into consideration.<sup>27</sup>

### Regional Perceptions

Most theories of hegemony assume the existence of a second necessary condition for a state to become a hegemon. Conventional approaches generally posit that there is no hegemony without the acknowledgement, or “followership”, of others. Surprisingly, however, despite being such a pivotal term, there has been very little discussion of how we understand followership. Most studies have focused on the mechanisms of leadership as such and followers are only discussed in order to, for instance, illustrate the principle of free-riding in hegemonic orders or to classify all states that can be ruled out as potential contenders for the hegemon (Cooper et al. 1991: 394). If discussed explicitly, followership is often tightly linked with notions of legitimacy. “True” followership is characterized by an appreciation that a hegemon can make decisions on behalf of the group in pursuit of collective goals and it “involves followers intertwining their own interests with those of a leader in whom they place confidence and trust” (Cooper et al. 1991: 397f.).<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the absence of a commonality of values is often used as evidence for the absence of meaningful power relations at the regional level.<sup>29</sup> Wisely, Heinrich Triepel puts this into

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to note here that this self-perception or identity needs to be inter-subjectively distributed among the political elite of a country and should not simply be the output of the “delusions of grandeur” of an individual or a minority of politicians. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this need for differentiation.

<sup>27</sup> The observation of this secondary-level dimension, however, needs, for two main reasons, careful reflection. First, the official rhetoric of regional powers might be misleading with regard to the identification of their underlying regional role conceptions. Potentially hegemonic states might be hesitant to openly embrace their status as the exceptional state. Regional powers further might openly deny any sense of exceptionalism or special responsibilities toward the region, so as to maintain the unstable equilibrium of regional hegemony and to deter suspicion and jealousies, if not open hostility, by its neighbors. In contrast, second, a “grandiose” rhetoric of power and importance by itself is equally insufficient for bringing about regional hegemony and, by itself, has no clear-cut impact on the kind of policies a regional power actually is willing and able to conduct within the region and at the global level. Methodologically, this can be tackled, for instance, with the help of Larson’s differentiation between “representational” and “instrumental” modes of communication. In the representational model, verbal content accurately reflects the beliefs, drives, emotions or attitudes of the subject. The instrumental model works with the assumption that the individual may use language to gratify desires, or influence others, rather than to communicate psychological states through lexical content. While the representational model is often inadequate for making inferences about the role conceptions of a decision-maker, the instrumental model requires interpretation, with negative implications for reliability. Larson concludes that a trade-off has to be made and that, ideally, the analysis has to consider both approaches, which correct each others’ deficiencies. In practice this means combining spontaneous speeches and statements, such as interviews and parliamentary debates, with speeches for which the context and audience has to be considered, to try to infer the communicator’s actual beliefs, given the knowledge of the general ambitions in the given situation (1998: 248f.). Further, coherence and stability across resources, types of texts and time will be examined, and the theoretically established insights can be used to facilitate an interpretation of sources in an iterative process between text and theory (Young and Schafer 1998: 67).

<sup>28</sup> There are, of course, exceptions, such as G. John Ikenberry’s research on the “institutional bargains” achieved in the US-European relationship at a global level, which also look in particular at the needs and interests of the potential followers (2001: 57). More often than not, reference is made to some “undisputed leader” or “co-operative hegemony”, which relies on “soft rule”, yet the precise mechanism of how followership is achieved and, more specifically, what the interests of the potential followers are remains rather vague (Fawn 2009; Pedersen 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this additional dimension to “regional perceptions”. Indeed, research on the “functionality” of regional institutions has shown that the absence of an explicit common regional identity is not necessarily detrimental to successful regional institution-building, as exemplified in NAFTA (Capling and Nossal 2009; Hurrell 2006b) and ASEAN where “little evidence in the behavior of ASEAN states in the security sphere

perspective. He claims that states, in general, are hesitant to “joyfully embrace” the lead of others (Triepel 1938: 144f.). Regional powers, indeed, often have to face suspicion and, at times, hostility, and verbal resistance is a common feature of regions characterized by the presence of a hegemon. The reasons for this might be, again, historically anchored, but, as to be expected, fear and jealousy of the position of the superior state are normal aspects of hierarchical systems.

What we should hence expect in hegemonic relations is that, frequently, the perception of a hegemon by secondary states is founded much more upon utility or necessity, but above all, upon the realization of its own weakness. Therefore, “regional acceptance” for the respective state’s special role, and the consequential demands on the power to act in accordance with that responsibility, are more suitable attributes for the definition of regional hegemony. In this conceptualization, normative consent from all secondary states in the respective region is, consequently, not considered a constitutive dimension of regional hegemony. This is a deviation from what is frequently considered among the foundations of a stable hegemony or of hegemonic leadership. It is argued here that a focus on legitimacy is inappropriately narrow if we take into account the enormous impact that material predominance of the hegemon can have. In other words, the focus on normative consent often overlooks that it is the cost-benefit calculations made by the neighboring states, which help to override any fear, jealousy or disagreement with the dominant power.<sup>30</sup>

Regional acceptance as a constitutive element can further be specified if attention is turned to what would define regional perceptions of other types of regional powers. Other than accepting the leading role of the dominant state, its regional neighbors could, on the one hand, show resistance and rejection, fuelled by a sense of threat and vulnerability. On the other, secondary states could feel a sense of empowerment, for instance, in the face of apparent weakness or lack of control by the regional power itself. An indicator for regional acceptance is, for instance, approval by the secondary state for the assistance of the regional hegemon, rather than turning to extra-regional actors.<sup>31</sup> They could further, too, demand the regional power to take on more responsibilities in the region, particularly in financial and administrative issues. Lake suggests, for instance, that a “failure of governments over the long term

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... suggest(s) that a shared identity existed among them” (Ravenhill 2009: 223). Others obviously disagree with this specific example, focusing on the “ASEAN way” of regional integration, for instance.

<sup>30</sup> A very instructive, theoretically founded argument for the ‘rationality’ of followership or ‘subordination’ is made by David Lake in his 2009 book on *Hierarchies in International Relations*. He finds, for instance, that one of the reasons for which ‘subordinate’ states accept the legitimate domination of another states is that it allows them to “divert scarce resources to other valued uses” than self-defense, which constitutes a “key national benefit for which states are willing to give up or ‘sell’ some measure of their sovereignty” (2009b: 138). An empirical example is given by Steven David, who argues that Third World states “where leaders often have low levels of domestic legitimacy (...) elites may bandwagon with locally strong states in order to fend off local threats and thereby bolster their chances of survival, even to the detriment of the state itself” (David 1991, cited by Kubicek 2009: 241). Also see the case made by Diana Tussie about the “grudging acceptance of the inevitable, eager compliance and blanket hostile rejection” that can combine in a complex manner to characterize the relationship between a regional power and subordinate states (Tussie 2009: 187-8). An example of “followership” maybe being produced by economic necessity rather than confidence and trust is what could be interpreted as “followership” is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and in particular the relations between the US and Mexico. Capling and Nossal, for instance, have described NAFTA as an “agreement between two small economies seeking, with comparable levels of desperation, secure access to an increasingly protectionist American market, and a superpower, which had its own reasons for agreeing to a common agreement with its neighbors” (2009: 153).

<sup>31</sup> This understanding of “regional perceptions” and the specific form it is expected to take on under regional hegemony is somewhat related to what Lake describes as “political authority”, in that it focuses, at least in its empirical measurement, on the “number of issues over which A can legitimately regulate B” rather than some rather intangible notion of “followership” or “legitimacy”. This article further sides with Lake on his assumption that this “authority” does not need to be complete: “If a critical mass of subordinate states arises in the region, it can legitimate the dominant state’s role in providing order and, especially, enforcing its rule” (Lake 2009a: 44; Lake 2009b: 45).

to diversify their trading partners indicates a tacit acceptance of the dominant state's potential influence" (Lake 2009a: 47). At the societal level, regional hegemons might also have intra-regional appeal, in terms of their cultural products and educational institutions; this could be reflected, for instance, in patterns of labor migration.

### **Beyond Primus Inter Pares: Provision of Regional Public Goods**

Hegemony, whether existing regionally or globally, is often differentiated from other forms of hierarchical power relations by a unilateral provision of all forms of public goods. In contrast, domination as a form of regional power is associated with private good provision, a lack of control with the absence of goods provision.<sup>32</sup> Conventional theories of hegemony assume the provision of very specific outcomes in this regard, such as an open trading system, the maintenance of a structure of exchange rates and expect the hegemon to serve as a "lender of last resort" and to "co-ordinate macroeconomic policies" (Gilpin 1987: 86ff.; Kindleberger 1986: 841). As noted, these particular public goods are a biased reflection of the principles and norms of U.S. hegemony since World War II, and the goods that other potential hegemons provide may be very different and context-specific; particularly as we are talking about regional systems rather than a global, virtually all-encompassing one, which could be, at least in principal, very different.<sup>33</sup>

As long as the criteria of non-exclusiveness and non-rivalry are fulfilled, and as long as the regional power bears a disproportional share of the costs, hegemonic provision can therefore be spoken of.<sup>34</sup> This might, for instance, concern the provision of a regional identity, or a hub for identification and solidarity, but also more typical and concrete scenarios such as the creation of consensus over common regional policies, the provision of transport and infrastructure or of regional security through enhanced military capacity, but also other ways of enabling regional and domestic stability and economic progress (Ferroni 1999: 7). The provision of public goods thus can constitute a deliberate act by the regional hegemon to establish and mark its presence in the region.<sup>35</sup>

### **Influencing Preferences and Values Through Projection**

This last dimension concerns how a hegemon interacts with secondary states and exercises its power, and, as such, is central to our differentiation between regional hegemony and other forms of regional powerhood. In this context, the exercise of power by regional hegemons is characterized by the "projection" of their preferences and values, without a regular reference to force, through material incentives, as well as through more subtle means, such as socialization, persuasion and what has been described as "discursive hegemony" (Nabers 2007: 18). In other words, projection implies the alteration or manipulation of preferences in an almost Neo-Gramscian sense; for instance, the persuasion of

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<sup>32</sup> There is disagreement among some scholars about whether, under hegemony, outcomes should mainly benefit the hegemon or the system as a whole; or in other words, "whether the hegemonic role should be defined to imply the ignorance of interests of others" (Ougaard 1998: 201). Most studies, including this one, agree on a situation of mixed motives and outcomes.

<sup>33</sup> An illustrative case, which has been described more accurately elsewhere (Prys 2009b), is how South Africa's policy of regional solidarity towards Zimbabwe should be classified as public goods provision. This leads us to, at least, question statements that, on the basis of this case, deny South Africa's hegemonic position in Southern Africa.

<sup>34</sup> There can also be "impure" public goods that only partially meet the criteria of non-exclusiveness and non-rivalry. This "expanded conception of public goods" is widely accepted in the literature (Stalgren 2000: 9).

<sup>35</sup> Again, David A. Lake has a similar conception of the reasons for public goods provision. Rather the conceiving this kind of activity as an "altruistic" gesture, he assumes that dominant states have "important incentives to provide order for their subordinates", as this earns them authority and the "ability to issue legitimate commands" (2009b: 177).

neighboring states to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) that is in fact set up according to the regional hegemon's preferences. More abstractly, projection is expressed as structural power, manifested, for instance, in structures that "distribute asymmetric privileges" but that "also affect the interests of actors, often leaving them willing to 'accept their role in the existing order of things'" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 53; citing from Lukes 1975: 24).

It is thus an independent dimension that can be and, moreover, needs to be, analytically and empirically differentiated from the dimension of provision discussed above. Projection as a dimension of regional powerhood captures, as noted above, features of the *relationship* between regional power and the secondary states; it is measured and evaluated with regard to the mechanisms used to impact on states within the neighborhood. It thus constitutes a fundamentally different aspect of regional powerhood as the "provision of public goods", which is about the allocation of collective goods for the region as a whole; no one, ideally, can be excluded and the consumption of these goods is non-rival. Needs are, hence, fulfilled that would otherwise remain unsatisfied. This can create a certain sense of legitimacy (cf. Lake 2009b) and thus might appear to resemble the *outcomes* of projection. Nevertheless, in the assessment of "provision", we focus on the regional power as an actor that chooses between private and public goods, instead of focusing on the relational aspects of regional powerhood that are discussed as "projection". This also means that, rather than preferring one understanding of power over another, for example hard power capabilities vs. power over outcomes and structural power, we need to take into account all of the different possibilities, in order to adequately describe the strategic options available to a regional power.

The direct examination of the projection of values and interests by the regional hegemon is obstructed by two factors. First, projection is, above all, a long-term process, which is not always deliberate but rather happens over time, whether stimulated by an underlying strategy of socialization or by a series of unintentional consequences. Second, the process of projection is a very complex and little understood, or even studied, subject. Very often, research on this issue is informed by a constructivist approach that tends to neglect the more power-political aspects of the change of substantive beliefs, which is the key factor in the interaction of the hegemon with the secondary states (cf. Checkel 2005). One of the few articles that explicitly addresses this subject is Ikenberry and Kupchan's *Hegemonic Power and Socialization*. The authors admit that "[t]he process of discerning and measuring shifts in substantive beliefs is difficult when dealing with isolated individuals and is even more problematic when dealing with diffuse elite communities" (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 294).

They conclude that the best, and probably only, way to measure this process is by a "nuanced reading of history and efforts to infer beliefs from statements and behaviors" (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 294). In order, however, to avoid a tautological operationalization of interests and beliefs any assessments of the underlying interests and norms need to be differentiated, as far as possible, from the behavioral aspects of projection. For this purpose, an assessment of this dimension in empirical case studies can be split into two parts. Initially, the more general preferences and values of the regional power in the issue area require analysis, with the help of, for instance, official government policies and statements and the relevant secondary literature.

Second, whether and how specific attempts have been made to project them on the neighboring states needs to be discerned. In order to account for the existence, or the absence, of projection in contemporary events, this process could be specified by a focus upon the state's and its representatives' activities that promote its own vision and values for the region, through activities and initiatives at the multilateral level, the establishment of new institutions, financial assistance and, if relevant, the

conditions attached to it (Ougaard 1998: 201).<sup>36</sup> This also covers the aspect of “material inducement” that “triggers the socialization process” (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990: 284).<sup>37</sup>

The projection of values, too, can become visible through the content of regional and global negotiations, and the actual agendas of regional organizations and institutions. Whether and how others participate in these initiatives, as well as, if possible, the actual and concrete impact of these types of activities on the secondary states can also be assessed. A more immediate form of value projection is the direct construction of a similar political system in the secondary states through the mediation of conflicts, training of administrative and police officers, but also forms of business cooperation and rules for corporate governance brought in by the private sector. Generally, the role of non-state actors should not be underestimated for assessing the projection of values because they can often be more explicit and outspoken than governments in exporting the regional hegemon’s model to the neighboring states.

A conceptualization of hegemony as constituted by these four secondary dimensions – self-perception, regional perceptions, provision and projection – implies individual necessity and joint sufficiency of all four factors, yet, it is, of course, an ideal-type. For the practical application of the term we have to recognize that a hegemon’s deviation from one of the aspects does not mean that we have to deny the existence of hegemony immediately and totally. Table 2 summarizes the findings of this section into a typology of regional powers, by laying out the constitutive dimensions of each of the three forms. “Regional hegemony” has been discussed at length and the values of the other two forms are derived from this discussion.

**Table 2: A Typology of Regional Powers**

	<b>Regional Detached Powers</b>	<b>Regional Hegemons</b>	<b>Regional Dominators</b>
<b>Cognitive aspects: self-perception</b>	Domestic or global priorities	Regional exceptionalism (positive contribution)	Regional exceptionalism (selfish)
<b>Relational aspects: Regional perceptions</b>	Non-acceptance (empowerment of secondary states)	Regional acceptance	Non-acceptance (fear/vulnerability)
<b>Interaction aspects: Exercise of power</b>	No impact	Influence of preferences and values	Impact through force/violence
<b>Outcome aspects: Type of goods</b>	No goods/private goods	Regional public goods	Private goods (possible forced contributions by other states)

<sup>36</sup> In contrast, “regional dominators” neglect the interests of secondary states and show the will to coerce if necessary; “detached regional powers” fail, or are unwilling, to engage with the region and we thus expect the absence of meaningful regional co-operation, whether benevolent or characterized by force.

<sup>37</sup> I further agree with the authors that socialization is an elite phenomenon, “for norms to have consequential effect on state behavior, they must take root within the elite community”.

## THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL OPENNESS ON REGIONAL POWERS

Above, the fact that regions are embedded into the international system and, as such, are open systems with permeable borders needs to be considered to do justice to the fact that hegemony (or powerhood in general) takes place at a regional level, rather than at the global level of international politics. It needs to be acknowledged as an important factor in regional power politics as it makes regions and even their most powerful states vulnerable to external impacts, but also provides additional opportunities for regional powers to pursue external partnerships or other forms of interactions, which can alter regional dynamics. In addition to pointing at regional specificities, for instance, in terms of public goods provision, this regional openness affects regional powers in a two-fold manner: firstly, through, global systemic pressures and the pursuit of economic or other interests within the region by external actors, secondly, through factors such as the global ambitions of the regional power, that divert its attention and resources from its apparent regional responsibilities.

For analytical purposes, it seems, therefore appropriate, and indeed necessary, to separate the effects of this openness into an “outside-in” and an “inside-out” dimension. This, for instance, helps to evaluate, in which way the mutual inter-connections between the regional and global levels impact on the kind of regional power a state is, and/or that it becomes. A conceptualization of regional hegemony thus seems incomplete if we do not explicitly take into account the regional hegemon’s necessary balancing of regional and global aspirations, expectations and pressures. Yet, traditionally, the discussion of this global-regional nexus has been limited to the analysis of the “superpower overlay” of regions during the Cold War period. It has been widely overlooked that the reciprocal inter-connections between the regional and global levels exist and, further, create constraints and opportunities that differentiate regional hegemony from hegemony at the global level. This, of course, would also apply if a closer look was taken at the other types of regional powers developed in this article.

The outside-in dimension describes the way systemic pressures arising from the international distribution of power help frame the way in which regional hegemons relate to their neighbors. Among others, the following assumptions are made. First, non-global powers make their behavior dependent on the global distribution of power and, thus, on superpower calculations and strategies. Under bipolarity, there is a strong pressure to become compliant to one of the global powers and give up at least some autonomy in exchange for protection against the other global power. During the Cold War, this had the impact of subordinating regional dynamics to global conflict dynamics between the two superpowers, who projected their power struggle onto the regional via proxy wars in Africa and Asia (Buzan and Waever 2003: 61).<sup>38</sup> Under multipolarity, non-global powers have most autonomy and regional influence as they have a greater choice of global alliance partners. Under unipolarity, regional powers are expected to have more opportunities than under bipolarity, yet the respective states are no match for the global hegemon and often must follow its lead, particular in issues of strategic importance to the global power (Kaarbo and Lantis 2002: 10).

The range of possible behaviors by regional powers is further limited by the more direct interference of external, more powerful actors in the region. This, classically, could comprise the backing of a local rival to the potential regional hegemon, in order to inhibit its growth into a global competitor (Buzan and Waever 2003: 46ff.). Yet, it also includes the exercise of economic interests, such as the extraction of

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<sup>38</sup> Yet, even during this period of massive external interference into regions not all autonomous regional power activity was suppressed. Instead, regional hegemons have always tried – and at times succeeded – to play off superpowers against each other and realize their own potential through strategies of including or excluding the superpowers into or from their regional projects (cf. Zimmermann 1972).

natural resources and market access. More recently, the interest of external actors in regional, both inter- and intra-state, conflicts has increased, as the “global war on terror” calls for the prevention of state failure, as it is expected that failed states could potentially turn into havens for international terrorism. An example for variation across this outside-in dimension are the changes identified by Kubicek in the “post-Soviet space” from the early to the late 1990s, a period where the situation changed from one in which Russia “could act as a hegemonic power over other CIS states” to one in which “the international environment was more pluralistic, with many actors (for example the US, China, Turkey, India, Iran and the EU) both interested and capable of playing a significant role in the various parts of the CIS” (2009: 244).<sup>39</sup>

In sum, external pressures can alter the options available to regional powers to adopt types of behavior that are not considered in analytical schemes in which the focus is on intra-regional relations alone.<sup>40</sup> A more specific empirical implication could be that the presence or absence of external actors within the region could modify regional perceptions of the regional hegemon. The dependence – economically, militarily and/or politically – on the regional power, for instance, could be alleviated by co-operation with another extra-regional power, which, in turn, may well intensify the resistance (or the ability to resist) of secondary states to the hegemon’s leading position.

Yet, aside from simply limiting the potential regional hegemon’s range of possible foreign policy choices and channels for interaction with its neighbors, global actors could also potentially open up or facilitate more diverse possible courses of action. Institutional and state actors on the global level can support and legitimize regional powers by, for instance, acknowledging them as their key partners in the region, by granting privileged access to global multilateral institutions and by giving incentives to the regional power to take care of its own “backyard”. When analyzing regional, rather than global hegemonic relations, we, on the one hand, need to consider that through the acknowledgement and legitimization by external powers, but also through the more immediate affect of the presence of regional powers in international decision-making processes that concern the region, additional tangible and intangible power resources for projecting their own preferences and values are handed over to the potential regional hegemon.

On the other hand, the treatment as a representative and as a natural regional leader, and the, sometimes explicit, formulation of specific expectations linked to this position by external actors can also impact negatively on regional perceptions. Alden and Vieira express their concern that “by conferring the status of regional leader upon emerging states in the developing world, actively encouraged in multilateral settings such as the WTO or the G7/8 [...] the industrial states effectively shepherd weaker states into a subordinate hierarchical framework” (Alden and Vieira 2005: 1081).<sup>41</sup> The regional power’s assumption of an intermediary role between regional in- and out-siders is, hence, often not appreciated by the neighboring states and, therefore, constitutes a factor that needs to be included. In assessing

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<sup>39</sup> This impact can be measured, for instance, by the analysis of trade patterns, development aid by the EU and the US, for example, also investment, for instance into oil and gas reserves in Azerbaijan, the Baku-Tsibilis-Cayhan pipeline to by-pass Russia (Kubicek 2009: 245).

<sup>40</sup> Ayooob makes a useful contribution to this discussion by differentiating between various forms of great power involvement in regions after the Cold War, alternating between disinterest, low involvement, instrumental intervention and identification, and summarizes their effects on the development of regional order (Ayooob 1999).

<sup>41</sup> This has, for instance, clearly been the case with regard to South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy. Outside pressure, above all by the EU, the UK and the US, in a Southern African milieu that is, understandably, receptive to anti-colonial rhetoric, actually serves to limit South Africa’s leverage in the region and restrict its options for influencing President Robert Mugabe (Prys 2009b).

what kind of role a regional power is able to play, all of these factors, hence, need to be taken into account.

As noted above, rather than looking at the impact of regional openness as a one-way street, analysis also needs to be given to its inside-out dimension, to “compensate for the top-down view of power-constructed regions” (Acharya 2007: 643) that is prevalent in most other contemporary studies of regions and regional powers. The inside-out dimension posits that regional powers, as opposed to powers at the global level, need to deal with the embeddedness of their local sphere of influence into the global system as well as the effects that this porousness has on their own, as well as their neighboring states’, foreign policy options. This means that in analyses of regional power relations we also have to look at the links between the regional power and global level politics, as the duality of being a regional power as well as having aspirations at the systemic level gives rise to potential tensions, as the two levels might require different, if not contradictory, courses of action. In other words, regional hegemony might be torn between achieving goals on the international and on the regional level (Zimmermann 1972: 19). With regard to the cognitive aspects of regional powerhood, this means that both the regional self-perceptions as well as the perceptions of the global role and entitlements of the respective state have to be taken into account.

In principle, a regional power can negotiate its regional and global aspirations through either “gate-keeping” or “stepping-stone” behavior. While the regional power has an interest in modeling an exclusive sphere of interest for itself in the region and using it as a foundation for potentially counter-hegemonic activities (gate-keeping), both global power gains (in realism) or global co-operation with powers of similar interest are also possible ambitions (stepping-stone). A regional gate-keeper should see itself clearly as the regional representative with explicit ambitions at the regional level. It will aim to distance or fence off the region from international influences and demonstrate resolve to exclude external actors from influential decisions made for and by the region. It should also be expected to see an emphasis on the formation and the maintenance of a specific regional identity in order to consolidate the regional power’s impact on the region.

Stepping-stone behavior might also include the enactment of a role as regional representative, yet the power’s outstanding regional position will be used to pursue goals at the global level, such as a permanent seat in the UN Security Council or mutually beneficial interactions with states that share similar economic interests. Yet, as mentioned above, the global ambitions of states such as Brazil, India or South Africa can have a disruptive effect on their perceived, desired or factual leadership within the region. First, and particularly in the developing world, a regional power might find its resources stretched through simultaneous diplomatic negotiations at the global and the regional level, which might lead to a lack of assertiveness, as well as a lack of either capacity or motivation to exercise control within its regional milieu. As in the case of India, second, an intimate alignment with the U.S. might have negative effects on how a regional power is perceived by neighboring states (Prys 2009a). Similarly, a regional power that seems to engage more with global institutions or players than with its own backyard could further nourish hostile sentiment among its neighbors. The global role conception and ambitions of the regional power will therefore also require examination.

As a consequence, the simultaneity of the regional power’s regional and global engagement can lead to a role conflict, or a situation in which the state’s global and regional aspirations require foreign policy actions that are incompatible. The resulting dual role needs to be incorporated into our understanding of regional powerhood and regional hegemony. We can expect, for instance, to observe the failure of regional hegemonic projects due to the interference of external actors, but, also, to come across

instances in which the regional hegemon was unsuccessful in achieving some of its global ambitions due to regional struggles. This inherent tension between different roles might, thus, contribute to the instability and elusiveness of regional hegemony.

## CONCLUSION

A review of the existing literature on regional powers and regional hegemons has laid bare the fact that scant reflection has hitherto been given vis-à-vis either the conceptual tools or the groundwork utilized in the analysis of these increasingly important actors in global politics. Often, the assumption seems to have been that systemic theories, such as the Theory of Hegemonic Stability, can be simply transferred to sub-systems or regions; this, however, has led to much misunderstanding and bemusement as to what regional powers could, and would want to, achieve at the regional level, as it has failed to take into account the fact that regional relations and policies necessarily differ from global policies.

Only one among the many differences that impact on how we theorize about these regional players is that a conflict can exist between what the respective states perceive as their appropriate roles at the two levels. The overarching ambition of the research presented here has therefore been to gain further insight into the nature of regional powers, as well as to provide a framework of analysis that can assist in comparison across cases, both in different geographical areas and across time. To this end, regional powerhood has been classified as an umbrella term for the various roles that a materially preponderant state within a defined regional space can assume. More specifically, then, the concept of regional hegemony has been developed as one possible role a regional power might play, by deducing its constitutive characteristics from existing theories of, and approaches to, both concepts of hegemony and region.

The application of Goertz' methodology for the construction of social science concepts has permitted this discernment between different types of regional powerhood, by focusing on the conceptual boundaries between regional hegemony and the two other ideal types, detached regional powers and regional dominators. Four secondary-level dimensions, or constitutive factors of regional hegemony, help to cement this differentiation. Self-perceptions of the regional hegemon, as well as the perceptions of the power by other states from within the region, have to be taken into account, as well as the ways in which the regional power influences the preferences and values of its neighboring states, and whether or not it provides regional public goods within the region. Indicators for each of these secondary-level dimensions have been developed, in order to facilitate a consistent application of this notion of regional hegemony in future empirical studies. What further stands out is that the openness of the region towards the international system, both with regard to the impact of external actors and structures and the global ambitions of the regional power, are considered as conditioning factors for the type of regional power a state becomes that have previously been overlooked in the literature on variance in regional orders.

Some wider implications of this research, as well as suggestions for future research, are additional outcomes of this study. The most immediate contribution is that a concept of regional hegemony has been formulated, one that is applicable across time and space to different regions, and which caters for the fact that they are governed by differing circumstances and have varied historical backgrounds. As such, it has been conducive to the emergence of a common language for dealing with the more specific aspects of the exercise of material preponderance, which allows for a more sophisticated comparison of how states use power in different ways. Elsewhere it has already been shown in a comparison of Indian

and South African foreign policies that the suggested conceptualization of regional power and hegemony, are, indeed, contributing to systematic comparison, at least between these two actors, both of whose regional and global foreign policies have been subjected to substantial scrutiny in recent years (Prys 2008).

The suggested framework could, for instance, further be used to account for the absence of effective regional institutionalization within NAFTA but also with regard to many regions in the Global South. There we can find constellations of “dual” or “multiple” bilateralisms between the regional power and two or more “spokes” rather than an integrative structure. In these regions, frequently, institutions are deliberately left weak and are “designed to ensure the least disruption to national policies and governance” (Capling and Nossal 2009: 164-5). This dynamic is indeed very explicit in North America (cf. Hurrell 2006b: 563); and with the suggested framework, comparisons with the regional powers of South Asia (India) and also the area of the former Soviet Union (Russia) may well show, in particular with regard to the interest and behavior of the respective regional power, significant similarities.

This article thus provides a starting point for theory development that could include studies about the reasons why different states take on different regional roles. Further, this understanding of regional powerhood as an independent variable might also be used to explain different outcomes, such as the level and depth of regional integration and the representation of the region by the regional power in international organizations. Additionally, an application of the developed framework may well illustrate what kind of impact a regional power has on the international level, which, at least intuitively, is also dependent upon the standing that a state has within its own neighborhood.

Obviously, there are many possible avenues along which this research could be further advanced. Future research can apply this concept to a broad range of cases – including, but not limited to, Brazil, Russia, Iran or even Australia, as well as historical cases, such as the US in Central America and the Caribbean at the turn of the nineteenth century. These cases could address, for instance, the role of domestic politics or the regime type of the regional power. The expansion of the typology of regional powers is another task to be completed, particularly if the aim is to use the concept as a dependent (or independent) variable taking on different observable values. A more explicit typology would require, for example, the exploration of the linkages between the four different dimensions, as well as an investigation of the degree to which they actually contribute to the constitution of a certain type of regional power, or, in other words, whether their significance in the developed analytical framework should be weighted. What is needed, therefore, is a complex, nuanced and multi-layered theoretical framework in which to assemble and scrutinize all the relevant dimensions and factors; it is hoped that this research will give significant direction and impetus to this crucial development.

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