



**COMUNICAÇÕES**

*Fernando José Ludwig*

*Ramon Blanco*

**Gramscian and Foucaultian approaches to  
peace: hegemony through biopolitics**

Comunicação apresentada a: " 54th ISA Annual  
Convention", San Francisco, Ca., USA, 3-6 april 2012

# Gramscian and Foucaultian approaches to peace: hegemony through biopolitics

Fernando Jose Ludwig<sup>1</sup>

Ramon Blanco<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Since the end of the Cold war, the international system configuration developed in such way that allowed different approaches concerning the reflection about the construction of peace. Albeit many efforts to transform violent conflicts and construct a sustainable peace, the persistence of violent conflicts throughout the globe indicates that these efforts are, at least, problematic. Consequently, a critical line of thought became more salient across peace studies. In this context, this article aims to problematize the construction of peace from both, a gramscian and foulcauldian perspectives. Hence, we will explore points of convergences and divergences in both theories in order to achieve a critical comprehension of peace. Ultimately, the main goal is to evince that the construction of peace within the international system aims the core's maintenance of hegemony through the biopolitical power, exerted over the periphery.

## Introduction

Peacekeeping, peacebuilding and state-building efforts carried out by several international actors, and in especial those led by the United Nations (UN), have become pivotal elements of the current international scenario. Indeed, they constitute the very core of international policies in regards to peace, development and security in

---

<sup>1</sup> Fernando Jose Ludwig is a PhD candidate of International Politics and Conflict Resolution at the Centre for Social Studies/ School of Economics at the University of Coimbra (Portugal). Funded by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT), reference number SFRH / BD / 64916 / 2009, and co-funded by Fundo Social Europeu (FSE). Email: [fernandoludwig@ces.uc.pt](mailto:fernandoludwig@ces.uc.pt).

<sup>2</sup> Ramon Blanco is currently a PhD Candidate on International Politics and Conflict Resolution at University of Coimbra in partnership with the Centre of Social Studies (CES). His PhD studies are financed by Fundação para Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) - SFRH / BD / 43498 / 2008.. Email: [ramon@ces.uc.pt](mailto:ramon@ces.uc.pt).

our time. Nevertheless, this was not always the case. Indeed, this was only possible with the end of the Cold War. This is a direct consequence of the transformation of the shared international rationale in regards to peace: which went from the maintenance of a negative peace to the attempt of building a positive peace in the international scenario.<sup>3</sup>

The present paper aims to explore whether the construction of peace within the current international system might be understood as the development and enhancing of an hegemonic understanding of the world being rendered operational through the exercise of a biopolitical power over post-conflict populations. Thus, it seeks to set the stage for further problematizations and future researches of the construction of peace in the international scenario departing from reflections of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. The paper is divided as the following: in the first place, in order to better understand the operacionalization of peace, we delineate how the United Nations approached peace throughout time; in the second and third place, it is intended to discuss both Gramscian and Foucauldian conceptual tools that could enable a problematization of the construction of peace as an attempt of fostering hegemony. These sections will discuss, respectively, the notions of hegemony and biopolitics.

## **Peace in the International Scenario**

After the World War II, and during the whole period of the Cold War, the main UN activity related to international peace was peacekeeping; which usually meant the deployment of a small military force aiming just to monitor a ceasefire, or patrol a neutral territory between former combatants (Paris and Sisk, 2009: 4). Peacekeeping was usually a military force that acted as a sort of buffer between two states (Newman et al., 2009: 5). At that time, peacekeeping was reflected as a mere instrument of “conflict management, conflict containment or conflict suppression, dealing within symptoms and not concerned with fundamental resolution” of the conflict (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 2000: 5). Indeed, they were not concerned with transforming these conflicts or addressing their deep root causes. Therefore, these

---

<sup>3</sup> For more on positive and negative peace, see (Galtung, 1969).

kind of operations deployed during the period of the Cold War proven to be very poor at achieving the resolution of violent conflicts (Bellamy et al., 2010: 190).<sup>4</sup>

In fact, quite often, this instrument directed to peace would find itself framed by the bipolar rivalry of the Cold War and used to maintain the international order. Indeed, peacekeeping often functioned as “a mechanism of great power management: it aimed to contain conflicts and prevent them from escalating, and to maintain stability so that a political solution could be achieved between states” (Newman et al., 2009: 6). Since the international order and stability, on the one hand, and violent conflict between states, on the other hand, were perceived, at that time, as the main objectives and challenges, respectively, in regards to the international scenario, the peacekeeping was usually deployed “to assist states to peacefully resolve disputes in their external relations between each other” . Therefore, observing the operations deployed during this period, “[a]lmost all the major operations of the Cold War represented the classic model of inter-state conflict management and few deployed in civil war situations” .

These operations are the best example of what Alex Bellamy, Paul Williams and Stuart Griffin call “traditional peacekeeping” (2010: 173-174). Reflecting about the UN practices towards international peace during the Cold War, Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver Richmond (2009: 6-7) highlight some peace operations that are emblematic of this period, for instance, the UN Emergency Force deployed to Egypt after the Suez War (1956-1967), the UN Military Observer Group deployed to supervise a ceasefire between India and Pakistan (1949), and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (1964), among others.<sup>5</sup>

It was only with the end of the Cold War that the nature of peace operations changed. Nevertheless, this modification did not happen in a vacuum. It happen in the international *zeitgeist* that emerged with the end of the ideological dispute, between the USA and the URSS. Without the Cold War ideological tension, and the adding triumphant spirit of the West – perhaps most iconic in Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History* (1992) – there was little debate about how the internal domestic design of the states should look like. Indeed, as an US State Department’s Deputy Director, Fukuyama was bluntly clear proclaiming the “end point in mankind’s ideological

---

<sup>4</sup> For a more extensive delineation of the challenges and weakness of this kind of peace operations, see for instance (Bellamy et al., 2010: 190-192; Bercovitch and Dean, 2012: 82-83).

<sup>5</sup> For further missions of this kind, see (Newman et al., 2009: 6-7).

evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human governance” (1989: 4). The end of the ideological debacle brought an international *zeitgeist* where liberal democracy was understood by several international actors as “the only model of government with any broad legitimacy and ideological appeal in the world”<sup>6</sup> (Diamond et al., 1990: x). This was clearly evinced, for instance, by Paris (2004: 20) when he remembers that, in the period of 1990-1996, more than three dozen of countries started to adopt liberal democratic constitutions of the first time. This fact raised the number of liberal democracies in the world from 76 to 118. At that time, there was little doubt that the states should all resemble liberal democracies .

This rationale certainly reached, and started to underpin, the international policies directed to peace, especially the UN’s. At the beginning of the 1990s, the UN released an important document dealing with international peace – the *Agenda for Peace* (A/47/277). This document rapidly became a pivotal text regarding international peace in the post-Cold-War world precisely because it is there where the UN delineates its instruments directed to the construction of international peace, and because it is a document that very much clarifies the UN’s own understating about what peace is. These instruments directed to the achievement of peace at the international level became denser and deeper from this document onwards, and permeate UN publications regarding international peace from that time onwards.

The instruments established by the UN are namely five: conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacekeeping and peacebuilding<sup>7</sup> (UN, 2008: 17-18). Conflict prevention is an instrument that deals essentially with “the application of structural or diplomatic measures to keep intra-state or inter-state tensions and disputes from escalating into violent conflict”; it involves “the use of the Secretary-General’s ‘good offices’, preventive deployment or confidence-building measures” based on “structured early warning, information gathering and a careful analysis of the factors driving the conflict” .

---

<sup>6</sup> To be fair, Paris (2004: 21) remembers that this view of the world was not universally shared.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth to mention that the very name of some of these instruments is already present in publications of Johan Galtung (1976). This is, perhaps, a clear indication of the influence that reflections made within Peace Studies influenced the formulation of the document. In fact, the UN itself acknowledges Galtung’s and Peace Studies’ influences (UN, 2010: I; 45).

Peacemaking, by its turn, “normally includes measures to address conflicts in progress and usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement” (UN, 2008: 17). Apart from the Secretary-General’s ‘good offices’, “[p]eacemakers may also be envoys, governments, groups of states, regional organizations or the United Nations, (...) [or carried out even by] unofficial and non-governmental groups, or by a prominent personality working independently” The instrument designed as peace enforcement deals with “the application, with the authorization of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force (...) [aiming] to restore international peace and security” .

Another instrument is peacekeeping.<sup>8</sup> This instrument is understood as “a technique designed to preserve the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers” (UN, 2008: 18). Lastly, peacebuilding<sup>9</sup> “involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development” . It aims to address “the deep-rooted, structural causes of violent conflict” concentrating on “the functioning of society and the State, and seek to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions” . These instruments are designed to deal with violent conflicts in their different phases of escalation. Notwithstanding, the clear-cut distinction between each of these instruments is not an easy enterprise and to precisely say where one instrument begins and the other ends on the ground is highly contested and subjective. In fact, these instruments may quite often overlap.

## The UN Peace as Liberalization

---

<sup>8</sup> Peacekeeping is a highly disputed concept. For other definitions of the term, see for instance (Bellamy et al., 2010; Butler, 2009: Chapter 4; Diehl, 2008: Chapter 1; Diehl et al., 2010; Durch and Berkman, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> For other definitions of the term and the different understandings of peacebuilding among different international actors, including within the UN, see for instance (Barnett et al., 2007; Chetail, 2009; Gourlay, 2009: 3-48). For an evolution of the concept within the UN, see for instance (UN, 2010: 45-49).

The UN, after the Cold War, understood that in order to transform intra-state violent conflicts it had to pay attention to human needs and overcoming structural sources of violence (Bercovitch and Dean, 2012: 10). The UN answer to that was very clear, as early as 1992, in the UN's *Agenda for Peace* when the organization perceived that it should "address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression" (A/47/277). Therefore, the UN peace operations started to change, becoming less traditional peacekeeping operations and performing more peacebuilding activities.

Nevertheless, one should remember that this transformation was not being implemented in a vacuum. An attentive observer should have in mind that, on the one hand, the post-Cold War period witnessed deployed peace operations performing a scope of activities *within* the domestic environment of 'post-conflict' states; on the other hand, one should not forget that this transformation in regards to peace operations activities took place within an international environment embedded in a liberal triumphant spirit that resulted from a sense of an ideological victory with the end of the Cold War. This certainly had an unquestionable influence in the kind of activities performed by peace operations and the outcomes expected from these activities. In such international scenario, where an atmosphere of a strong liberal triumphalism was experienced, it was highly shared that political and economic liberalism was the route to deal with several international issues, ranging from poverty and underdevelopment to violent conflicts.

In such environment, to achieve peace in 'post-conflict' states meant to make operational the liberal peace argument there and, therefore, to liberalize them. Hence, the political, economic and social spheres of these states should be profoundly transformed in order to make them liberal democracies. Therefore, on the political realm was pursued the implantation of democratic regimes in these countries. This process, nevertheless, was underpinned by a very strict, and procedural, understanding of 'democracy'. In this context, the democratization of 'post-conflict' states simply meant holding elections periodically; being the first one usually within the first years of formal peace. On the economic side, this meant the construction of an open-free-market-oriented economy. This was pursued through several instruments ranging from the reduction of the state's role within the economy to the stimulation of the free flow of capital and through conditional loans. On the social sphere, this meant the pursuit of

the construction of liberal society. This was attempted through practices that ranged from the promotion of human rights to the stimulation of the creation of civil society organizations.

Indeed, Roland Paris makes a characterization of what would be the typical peace operation during the 1990s that it is worth quoting at length. For him, the “typical formula for peacebuilding” at that time,

“included promoting civil and political rights, such as the right to free speech and a free press, as well as freedom of association and movement; preparing and administering democratic elections; drafting national constitutions that codified civil and political rights; training or retraining police and justice officials in the appropriate behavior for state functionaries in a liberal democracy; promoting the development of independent “civil society” organizations and the transformation of formerly warring groups into democratic political parties; encouraging the development of free-market economies by eliminating barriers to the free flow of capital and goods within and across a country’s borders; and stimulating the growth of private enterprise while reducing the state’s role in the economy. (...) [On the economic sphere,] [c]omprehensive marketization programs were usually initiated right away. (Paris, 2004: 19)

Paris (2004: 19; Paris and Sisk, 2009: 6), in addition, rightly remembers that, at that period, the missions’ mandates, typically, tended to be limited in time. Furthermore, to him (Paris, 2004; Paris and Sisk, 2009), at this time, little attention was directed to the construction, or strengthening, of institutional structures inside those states. In very few words, one can argue that the major focus of these missions was the rapid democratization and marketization of the ‘post-conflict’ states (Paris, 2004: 19). This rationale produced, in Paris’s and Sisk’s view (2009: 2), several destabilizing effects in different countries, such as: the elections serving as a catalyst element for the renewal of the conflict in Angola in 1992; the resurgent of not only war, but the occurrence of a genocide in Ruanda in 1994; the reversion of the democracy to a despotic form of rule by the elected officials in Cambodia in the 1990s, with Hun Sen, and Liberia after 1997, with Charles Taylor; the reinforcement of the power of the nationalist elements and the increasing of power of those operating in the black markets after the Dayton Accords; and the reproduction of the sources of the conflict in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala ; to name a few.

All these elements indicated that the peace operations had to be rethought. Interestingly, rather than stimulating a pulling-back from the enterprise or the



rethinking of its underpinning normative framework, the failures and limitations of the early 1990's peace operations brought the conclusion that more needed to be done, in terms of timeframe and the range, scope and depth of the activities performed. Hence, by the end of the 1990s, and the beginning of the 2000s, the peace operations were transformed. A pivotal conclusion drawn by those working on peacebuilding, including the UN was that peace operations need to be longer in time and a major focus should be directed towards the construction of governmental institutions in the intervened states (Paris and Sisk, 2009: 2). From the late 1990s onwards, the missions started to incorporate such concern and even those already on the ground were reconfigured. Observing the missions deployed during 1999, for instance Kosovo or Timor, one could clearly see that not only the missions' mandates were much more expansive, but also that the institutional structures of the states became part of the interventions, most of the time the fundamental one .

In a sharp contrast with peace operations deployed during the Cold War, peace operations of the post-Cold War world were different both in regards to the situation where they were deployed, and the activities performed on the ground. Indeed, most of peace operations deployed after the Cold War, especially from the end of the 1990s onwards, were deployed "into domestic situations – after or sometimes during civil conflict – and have involved some combination of tasks related to promoting domestic security, development and humanitarian assistance and strengthening governance and the rule of law" (Newman et al., 2009: 7). Therefore, observing peace operations deployed during the period from the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s onwards, what is quite noticeable is that, as a direct consequence of much more expansive mandates, the missions started to pay attention to a broader scope of activities.

Indeed, from that time onwards, following security and development conceptual trends, peace operation missions became deeper and wider. Their mandates started to encompass activities beyond the provision of mere immediate physical security, the democratization through elections and the marketization of the economy. The newly reconfiguration of peace operations would embrace activities such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, activities in the realm of education, health, and basic services, the creation of institutions, the establishment of judicial institutions, the functioning of public administration systems, the creation of

political parties, the strengthening of the state's capacity to provide services to its population, the very relationship between the 'post-conflict' state and its own population, and the promotion of a civil society (Paris, 2010). The most emblematic cases of this kind of intervention were, for instance: "Cambodia, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Chad, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Kosovo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Timor-Leste, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eastern Slavonia and Croatia" (Newman et al., 2009: 7).

Therefore, observing current peacebuilding operations deployed to post-conflict environments, what is perceived is that building peace is essentially the pursuit of the liberalization of post-conflict states. This liberalization is rendered operational through restructuring economic, political and social spheres of these states so they start to function as liberal entities. Nevertheless, rather than neutral or mere technical restructuring efforts, these practices can be understood as the fostering of one understanding of the world, and of how each one of these sphere should function, internationally. Indeed, this is an effort of fostering certain values throughout the globe. Not by coincidence, the process of building peace in post-conflict environments can be perfectly understood as the fostering and sustaining a hegemonic view of the world rendered operational through the exercise of a biopolitical power over post-conflict populations. In order to clearly understand the operation of this process, one should have a clearer understand of the notion of hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci and the notion of biopolitics advanced by Michel Foucault. It is to the further delineation of both that this paper now turns.

### **Gramsci and Hegemony**

Despite the regular misuse of the concept of hegemony nowadays, among scholars this notion has become almost synonymous with the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. The works of Gramsci, and later Robert W. Cox and others (Arrighi, 1993; Cox, 1983; Gill, 1993; Morton, 2007; Robinson, 2006; Sassoon, 1987; Sassoon, 2000; Taylor, 2010), sought to develop a theory of hegemony that aimed to cover social relations struggles linked to a specific period of time, and importance of these social relations struggles to dominant political and social class formations.

Despite the realist interpretation of hegemony grounded on a power state's dominance over others in relation to their material resources (Joseph, 2008: 111), and the structuralists' focus on a parallel reality beyond the visible actors (the structure) that impels domestic and international relations (through capitalism), we share Gramsci's and the neo-Gramscians' view that hegemony involves an inherent complex of social relations to explain the dominance of one group over another. But to fully understand Gramsci's notion concepts in his theory, like civil society, state, and historical bloc, must first be interpreted. In regard of this, Boccock (1986) suggests a deeper division in Gramsci's notion by separating it into three distinct, and interconnected, areas: economic; civil society, and state.<sup>10</sup> But it is stressed that Gramsci, despite his preoccupation with the economic, was more concerned about the state and civil society areas (Boccock, 1986), and how they interact. This division has only one analytical purpose, which is to understand the complexity and variability of Gramsci's interpretation of power relations. It is evident that any of these assumptions can be interpreted separately, but this must be done along with all the components at a particular juncture.

According to Bobbio, the main distinction between Gramsci's and Marx's conceptualization of power relations and spheres of influence is related to the dichotomy between the relations of structure and superstructure. Gramsci's concept of hegemony assumes that ideology is more important than economics, and civil society (consensus) is more significant than political society (coercion). The central point of hegemony in Gramsci thus consists of a blend of philosophy and practice within political life (Gramsci, 1971), thereby reformulating Machiavelli's duality of political practice, taking it as being the practice of coercion to formulate consent (Arrighi, 1993; Cox, 1983). According to Texier, however, presenting structure-superstructure relations as being a dichotomy, inherently conceiving a dominant, is an equivocation. He suggests that there is a dialectical unity in which each may be conditioner or conditioned (Texier apud Mouffe and Sassoon, 2002) and not, as Bobbio suggests, mutually excluded. Portelli argues that Gramsci's originality is

---

<sup>10</sup> As he says: 'Three major terms identify discrete, albeit interconnected, areas in social formation which form the baseline for the conceptualization of hegemony. These three terms [...] are the economic, the state, and civil society. It is the emphasis which Gramsci gave to the state, or the political, and to civil society which distinguishes his work that from other major Marxist writers.' (Boccock, 1986: 33).

---

precisely in overcoming this dichotomy with the concept of historical bloc, so addressing these questions of imposed primacy is worthless (Portelli, 1977). But there is one constant: it is at the superstructure level that hegemony performs.

So for Gramsci the concept of civil society is characterized by socio-political forces that interact with its institutions in order to form their political identities, which are manifested by private institutions such as religion, schools, associations, political parties, etc.. Thus Gramsci's definition of civil society would agree with Murphy, who says that civil society comprises "the political space and collective institutions in which and through which individuals form political identities ... It is the realm of voluntary associations, of the norms and practices which make them possible, and of the collective identities they form, the realm where 'I' becomes 'we'." (Murphy apud Germain and Kenny, 1998: 7). This passage clearly illustrates how difficult is to identify certain points of social formation to explain domination, power and, in this case, a state's power (hegemony) within the international system.

Closely connected with the concept of civil society is the concept of political society, or the state, which, according to Gramsci, is part of the superstructure<sup>11</sup> and, it is at this state level that civil society struggle occurs. By definition, state embraces both the use of violence (forces) and bureaucracies (legal system, education, public services, the press, means of communication, etc) (Bocock, 1986); in short, it represents what Lenin called the "dictatorship of the proletariat", that is, it is through these channels of domination that the dominant class exerts its influence so as to maintain (or form) consensus. Hence, hegemony permitted Gramsci to enlarge the concept of state, leading to a broader and a more complex formulation that would include the major underpinnings of political structures in civil society (Cox, 1983: 51).

---

<sup>11</sup> In order to show its relations, "What we can do, for the moment, is to establish two major superstructural 'levels': one that can be called 'civil society', which is the ensemble of organizations commonly called 'private', with the other being 'political society' or 'the state'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society, and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised throughout the State and 'judicial' government."(Gramsci, 1971: 12).

---

The combination of all levels of society, e.g., political society, civil society and the economic would therefore form what Gramsci called the *blocco storico* or, as he says, “the structures and superstructures form an ‘historical bloc’, as he pointed out,

“Structures and superstructures form an "historical bloc". That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production. From this, one can conclude: that only a totalitarian system of ideologies gives a rational reflection of the contradiction of the structure and represents the existence of the objective conditions for the revolutionising of praxis. If a social group is formed which is one hundred per cent homogeneous on the level of ideology, this means that the premisses exist one hundred per cent for this revolutionising: that is that the "rational" is actively and actually real. This reasoning is based on the necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure, a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process”(Gramsci, 1971: 366)

This notion of hegemony should involve all levels of society (Gruppi, 1978), and so for a revolutionary event to happen it is crucial that the political and civil societies organize themselves with a view to replacing the previously imposed order. Cox (1983) affirms, however, that “a new bloc is formed when a subordinate class (e.g., the workers) establishes its hegemony over other subordinate groups (e.g., small farmers, marginals)” (Cox, 1983: 57). For a historical bloc to exist there must be a dominant or hegemonic social class (Cox, 1983) in conjunction with other agents, such as the political parties, the media, the church, the educational system, among others (Sassoon, 1987). Notwithstanding the discussion about the effective power and influence of the US after the end of the Cold War (Arrighi, 1993), we believe that there is a consensus about its hegemonic power within the international system at the present time. Following this line of thinking, the above pre-requisite satisfies the requirements for the existence of other socio-political counter-movements which do, in fact, stand up to this *hegemon*. One of the goals of this work is to assess the search of a “transnational historical bloc” represented by international institutions, such as the United Nations and its peacekeeping/Peacebuilding missions, as being part of a singular and hierarchized concept of peace. The complexity of this approach relies on, according to Gramsci, the proximity of this concept to the social class (re)organization, predominately attached at national level.

In spite of this, and given the natural degree of difficulty, there are at least two interpretations related to the possibility of transposing the national historical bloc formation to the international relations sphere and, consequently, of forming a possible “transnational historical bloc” in South America’s regionalism. The first scenario consists of a juxtaposition of member states historical blocs whose international interests converge to maintain or improve both the domestic and international hegemonic *status quo*.

Of course this claim deserves to be developed and discussed further, and logically the “transnational historical bloc” is formed by the national (domestic) historical blocs of a certain regional organization. Bearing in mind that this latter is the combination of the dominant modes of production (structure) and the political and civil societies (superstructure), it is valid to affirm that choosing integration serves the purposes and interests of the *hegemon* within national borders. But this (international) view could easily be confronted with the state-centrism reductionism in international relations.

Another possible transnational historical bloc is a convergence between transnational relations of production (structures) interests, which, in a more integrated and globalised world, transcend state borders and are merged into regional organization commitments (legal and political norms). This is only likely to be accomplished in conjunction with the consent of political society (state) and the mobilization of civil society (both at the superstructural level). Probably the best known case of this is currently under construction by the European Union and its international legal personality. Thus the elite convergence of this specific region (marked by two world wars in the last century), plus the active participation of state and civil society, have led to a *sui generis* regional organization that is used as model for other regionalisms around the world.

In both cases, the concept of hegemony relies on a collective interest shared by the dominant classes. Even though Carnevali stresses the inapplicability of the Gramscian concept of historical bloc to the international arena, due its close connection with social class (Carnevali, 2005: 48), it is important to mention the importance of an emergent transnational class, based on shared capitalist interests. Under this conception, the “transnationalization” of historical blocs would follow the

---

natural course of a transnational capitalist class<sup>12</sup>. Ultimately, the transnational capitalist class would embrace the neo-liberalist order as one of its major premises, insofar as an elite-driven hegemonic project would be undertaken by certain capitalist groups whose intentions are reflected in an enlargement of their sphere of influence through a neo-liberal order. For example, the capitalist world represented by the Bretton Woods system after the Second World War, and then in the 1970s by the readjustment of the Trilateral Commission.

In Gramsci's theory of hegemony we found not only the importance of the formation of a historical bloc but also its influence on (re)ordering (or hierarchizing) social relations' strata. At the international structural level, according to Gramsci, the dominant class is measured by the state's ability to expand its territory, and by its economic and military power. However, a last element indicated by Gramsci is the "ideological position" (Mezzaroba, 2005: 18-19).

Finally, the duality of hegemony has to be assessed aiming to identify, theoretically, insurgent movements in the present international order. In order to tackle this point, Joseph pointed out the need to distinguish a deeper aspect of hegemony, enhanced at the structural level, and a surface aspect of hegemony, concerned with hegemonic projects and actions (Joseph, 2002: 128). However, the study of hegemony and counter-hegemonic projects requires this concept to be seen not as a tangible, static object of analysis, but as a complex, intricate, phenomenon of interdependent social relations leading to a unique set of interpretations in each case studied. As Joseph puts it:

"Structural hegemony and surface hegemony are two aspects of a continual process. Structural hegemony concerns the deep, underlying condition within society and the union of the social formation. Surface hegemony concerns the actual hegemonic projects that arise out of this situation it represents a manifestation of the underlying conditions, albeit, with its own character and dynamics" (Joseph, 2002: 131).

---

<sup>12</sup> Although this is important it is beyond the scope of this work to discuss it in depth. For further information about the transnational capitalist class see: Sklair, Leslie (2001), *The transnational capitalist class*, Oxford: Blackwell; Sklair, Leslie (2002), The transnational capitalist class and global politics: deconstructing the corporate-state connection, in *International Political Science Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 159-174; and Robinson, William and Harris, Jerry (2000), Towards a global ruling class? Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class, in *Science & Society*, vol. 64, no 1, pp. 11-54.

According to this line of thought, a counter-hegemonic movement should be manifest throughout the surface level, but, aiming to re-formulate (or re-hierarchize) and alter the reproductive effects of the structural hegemony in the region affected by the struggle. Let us take Bhaskar's concept of power one and power two relations, where the first is the "transformative capacity intrinsic to the concept of agency as such" and the second is the "possessed, exercised, mobilized, manifest, covert, indirect, mediated" relations (Bhaskar apud Joseph, 2002: 134); Joseph analogously compared these two conceptualizations of power with the duality of hegemony, where the structural and deep aspect of hegemony concerns power one, and the surface level matches with the characteristics of the power two. And he concludes that for a counter-hegemonic or a hegemonic project to prevail and endure it should accumulate the conditions necessary to operate across structural and civil hegemonies, and not only within them.

The concepts of hegemony, along with the concept of (Transnational) Historical Bloc, could be translated inside the field of Peace Studies. In this sense, the actual configuration of peace within the international system advocates the fostering of certain values, namely liberal-democratic ones. Rather than rhetorical, the fostering of them presupposes a deep restructuring of fundamental spheres of post-conflict states. Most importantly, it presupposes a great amount of control, influence and supervision of pivotal processes that surround their populations, which is a biopolitical enterprise *per excellence*. For a further clarification of this, this paper now turns to the delineation of the concept of biopolitics.

### **Foucault's Biopolitics**

From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, Foucault visualizes the appearance of a new technology of power that operates on the opposite pole of discipline. Therefore, existing at a different level, performing on a distinct scale and making use of different instruments, this is a technology of power that does not



exclude the former technologies. This technology is biopower.<sup>13</sup> Biopower in essence is a macro-political power. Whereas discipline is exercised on the individual, biopower is exercised on the collectivity having the population as its target (Kelly, 2009: 43). Consequently, this is a technology of power that is not concerned with the individual wo/man, but with wo/men as living-beings (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 242).

In contrast to discipline, biopower is applied “not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being” (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 242). As a result, whereas discipline is applied to a multiplicity of people because this whole can be divided into individuals who can be put under surveillance, series, hierarchies and if necessary be punished, biopower acts exactly in the opposite way. It is addressed to a multiplicity of people in the sense that “they form a global mass affected by overall process characteristics of birth, death, production, illness, and so on” . Therefore, biopower is a technology that is exercised not over the individual body, as in discipline, but is fundamentally exercised over the populations’ life. Consequently, rather than an “anatomy-politics of the human body” what is perceived is the emergence of a “biopolitics of the human race” .

Biopolitics is concerned with “the management of the phenomena that characterize groups of living human beings” (Rabinow and Rose, 2003: 6). Hence, it is “a form of politics that entails the administration of the process of life at the aggregate level of population” (Duffield, 2007: 5). The emergence of such power designates precisely “the moment at which the complex phenomena of human existence were submitted to the calculation and order of knowledge and power” (Smart, 2002: 99). Hence, biopolitics starts to problematize a whole set of phenomena that bind population together, that makes it a coherent whole. It problematizes all the “the mechanisms of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes” (Foucault, [1976] 1978: 139). In essence, biopolitics aims at the “the management and regulation of the population, the species body and its demographic characteristics” (Smart, 2002: 99).

Consequently, this new regulatory power is concerned essentially with “the problem of governing groups of humans represented in the form of population”

---

<sup>13</sup> This concept has been developed differently by contemporary philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben (1998), Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2000). For a contrast of theirs and Foucault’s use, see (Rabinow and Rose, 2006).

(Duffield, 2007: 6). As a result of that, biopolitics problematizes and rationalizes the whole set of processes surrounding the populations' life intervening in phenomena such as birth, death, production, working conditions, nutrition, illness, fertility, health, employment, life expectancy, housing, education, standards of living, and so on, and with all the conditions that surround and might have an influence on them (Duffield, 2007: 6; Foucault, [1976] 1978: 139). Therefore, biopolitics acts in two directions, not only at the life-supporting processes *per se*, but also at the surrounding conditions that influence those processes and at the milieu and environment where they develop (Foucault, [1976] 1978: 139). Ultimately, biopolitics acts where, and is concerned with, the "processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population" (Dean, 2010: 119).

This makes also the essence of biopolitics different from previous technologies of power. Whereas other technologies of power, like discipline for instance, has as its ultimate goal to correct, biopolitics targets the life-supporting processes in order to invest and foster populations' lives. It is a power concerned with life-supporting phenomena whose main objective is no longer to discipline but to enable and promote life, "to invest life through and through" (Foucault, [1976] 1978: 139). Its ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of life and its conditions. Hence, its objective is not to correct the individual, but to intervene at the level of the generality of the life-supporting phenomena of the population in order to enhance it.

In this sense, biopolitics can be characterized as a power that aims to *improve* life, a power that either "foster[s] life or disallow[s] it to the point of death" (Foucault, [1976] 1978: 138). Therefore, biopolitics is fundamentally a power that seeks to exert influence and "control over relations between the human race (...) and their environment, the milieu in which they live" (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 245). In fact, it is precisely through the exercise of power over the life-supporting processes of populations that biopolitics seeks to control processes of 'man-as-living-being' so, as a result, its essential objective can be achieved – the management and regularization of population's lives (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 247).

To intervene in such a way, and to accomplish that, biopolitics makes use of a whole set of instruments, mechanisms, techniques and institutions than might differ from discipline. In order to intervene in life-supporting process and their environment, this happens through the implementation of a whole set of instruments and institutions

that ensure the enhancement of vital processes of the population. Whereas discipline is only possible “thanks to a whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and reports” (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 242), biopolitics is rendered operational through both the installation of security mechanisms around the random elements in which a population is embedded and the implementation of apparatuses of security which seek to optimize life. Conventionally, mechanisms and apparatuses of security could be cameras, alarms, armies, police forces or intelligence services. However, for Foucault, they cover “all the practices and institutions that ensure the optimal and proper functioning of the economic, vital and social processes that are found to exist within that population and would thus also include health, welfare and education systems” (Dean, 2010: 29). Therefore, on the one hand, in regards to instruments, biopolitics employs, for instance, “forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures” and “techniques of mass surveillance, such as the census, and of mass control, such as health campaigns” (Kelly, 2009: 43). On the other hand, in regards of institutions, biopolitics is rendered operational, for instance, through the implementation, for instance, of health, education, welfare, employment or food systems (Dean, 2010: 29).

Since the objective is to intervene at the generality level of the phenomena, apart from those instruments and institutions, biopolitics makes also use of the notion of *average*. It is through the establishment of averages and *targets* that biopolitics seeks to maintain an equilibrium which offsets deviations and therefore its power is exercised. After all, it is only after the establishment of averages and targets that one can think that “the mortality rate has to be modified or lowered; life expectancy has to be increased; [or] the birth rate has to be stimulated” (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 246). It is only after the process of establishing targets that the life-supporting processes can be shaped and, as a consequence, a power over the population’s lives be exercised.

It is through the process of establishing targets and averages throughout several and distinct population’s life-supporting processes that biopolitics takes control of the vital processes of ‘man-as-species’. As a result of that, life can be fostered and consequently managed, so life ends up being regularized (Foucault, [1976] 2003: 247) and, in the end, and most importantly, normalized. At this point the ‘*norm*’ also plays a key role since it circulates between both discipline and biopolitics. It is in light of the ‘*norm*’ that discipline and biopolitics operate. As Foucault properly remembers, “[t]he

norm is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize” .

## **Conclusion**

The paper seeks to set draws some insights related the possibility of combining both conceptual tools in order to analyze the construction of peace in the international scenario. Departing from theoretical developments advanced by Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, it is quite possible to reproblematicize current peacebuilding efforts as an endeavor that, rather than being directed towards the proper reconstruction of post-conflict states and empowering their populations, seeks to advance a certain view of the world. It is fairly possible to understand these practices as another instrument of fostering a determinate range of values. Therefore, the construction of peace might be framed as an instrument of fostering and sustaining hegemony throughout the globe; this being rendered operational through the exercise of biopolitics over post-conflict populations, which is accomplished through restructuring the economic, political and social spheres in post-conflict states.

Thus, the actual configuration of international system in terms of peace relies upon the construction of a concept of peace, operationalized by the United Nations instruments (peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations), that aims to maintain a liberal international order. Hence, we may conclude that both approaches, Gramscian and Foucaultian accordingly, are prone to better understand how these missions are important to achieve a certain degree of consensus among its states members (hegemony), operating by the UN's regulations (biopolitics) *in locus*, e.g., at the periphery of international system.

**References:**

- (A/47/277) "An Agenda for Peace - A/47/277 - S/24111" 17th June 1992, (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N92/259/61/PDF/N9225961.pdf?OpenElement>), [10th November 2008].
- Agamben, Giorgio (1998) *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Arrighi, Giovanni (1993) "The three hegemonies of historical capitalism" in Gill, Stephen (Ed.) *Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 149-185.
- Barnett, Michael et al. (2007) "Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?" *Global Governance*. 13 (1), 35-58.
- Bellamy, Alex J. et al. (2010) *Understanding Peacekeeping*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bercovitch, Jacob; Dean, Richard (2012) *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-first Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Bocock, Robert (1986) *Hegemony*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Butler, Michael J. (2009) *International Conflict Management*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Carnevali, Giorgio (2005) "A teoria política internacional em Gramsci" in Mezzaroba, Orides (Ed.) *Gramsci: Estado e Relações Internacionais*. Florianópolis: Fundação Boiteux, 27-78.
- Chetail, Vincent (2009) "Post-conflict Peacebuilding - Ambiguity and Identity" in Chetail, Vincent (Ed.) *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-33.
- Cox, Robert (1983) "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method" *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*. 12 (2), 162-175.
- Dean, Mitchell (2010) *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: SAGE Publications.

Diamond, Larry et al. (Eds.) (1990) *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Diehl, Paul F. (2008) *Peace Operations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Diehl, Paul F. et al. (2010) "Peacekeeping" in Young, Nigel J. (Ed.) *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 386-406.

Duffield, Mark (2007) *Development, Security and Unending War - Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Durch, William J.; Berkman, Tobias C. (2006) "Restoring and Maintaining Peace: What We Know So Far" in Durch, William J. (Ed.) *Twenty-First-Century Peace Operations*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace and The Henry L. Stimson Center, 1-48.

Foucault, Michel ([1976] 1978) *The History of Sexuality - Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel ([1976] 2003) *Society Must Be Defended*. New York: Picador.

Fukuyama, Francis (1989) "The End of History?" *National Interest*. 16 (Summer), 3-18.

Fukuyama, Francis (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.

Galtung, Johan (1969) "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" *Journal of Peace Research*. 6 167-191.

Galtung, Johan (1976) "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding" in Galtung, Johan (Ed.) *Peace, War and Defence - Essays in Peace Research Vol. 2*. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 282-304.

Germain, Randall; Kenny, Michael (1998) "Engaging Gramsci: international relations theory and the new Gramscians" *Review of International Studies*. 24 3-21.

Gill, Stephen (ed.) (1993) *Gramsci, Historical materialism and international relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gourlay, Catriona (2009) *EU-UN Cooperation in Peacebuilding - Partners in Practice?* New York and Geneva: United Nations Publications.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publisher
- Gruppi, Luciano (1978) *O conceito de hegemonia em Gramsci*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal.
- Joseph, Jonathan (2002) *Hegemony: a realist analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Joseph, Jonathan (2008) "Hegemony and the structure-agency problem in International Relations: a scientific realist contribution" *Review of International Studies*. 34 109-128.
- Kelly, Mark G. E. (2009) *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*. New York: Routledge.
- Mezzaroba, Orides (2005) "Gramsci e Hegemonia" in Mezzaroba, Orides (Ed.) *Gramsci: Estado e Relações Internacionais*. Florianópolis: Fundação Boiteux, 7-26.
- Morton, Adam David (2007) *Unravelling Gramsci - Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy*. London Pluto Press.
- Mouffe, Chantal; Sassoon, Anne S. (2002) "Gramsci in France and Italy: a review of the literature" in Martin, James (Ed.) *Antonio Gramsci: Critical assessments of leading political philosophers*. London: Routledge, 81-115.
- Negri, Antonio; Hardt, Michael (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Newman, Edward et al. (2009) "Introduction" in Newman, Edward, et al. (Eds.), *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*. Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press, 3-25.
- Paris, Roland (2004) *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paris, Roland (2010) "Saving Liberal Peacebuilding" *Review of International Studies*. 36 (2), 337 - 365.
- Paris, Roland; Sisk, Timothy (2009) "Introduction: Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar Statebuilding" in Paris, Roland, et al. (Eds.), *The Dilemmas of*

*Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*. New York: Routledge, 1-20.

Portelli, Hugues (1977) *Gramsci e o Bloco Histórico*. Rio de Janeiro Paz e Terra.

Rabinow, Paul; Rose, Nikolas (2003) "Introduction - Foucault Today" in Rabinow, Paul, et al. (Eds.), *The Essential Foucault: Selection From The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. New York: New Press,

Rabinow, Paul; Rose, Nikolas (2006) "Biopower Today" *BioSocieties*. 1 (2), 195-217.

Ramsbotham, Oliver; Woodhouse, Tom (2000) "Introduction" *International Peacekeeping*. 7 (1), 1-7.

Robinson, William I. (2006) "Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony" in Bieler, Andreas, et al. (Eds.), *Images of Gramsci: connections and contentions in political theory and international relations*. London: Routledge, 165 - 180.

Sassoon, Anne S. (1987) *Gramsci's Politics*. London: Hutchinson.

Sassoon, Anne Showstack (2000) *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics - Beyond pessimism of the intellect*. London Routledge.

Smart, Barry (2002) *Key Sociologists - Michel Foucault*. New York: Routledge.

Taylor, Ian (2010) "Liberal Peace, Liberal Imperialism: A Gramscian Critique" in Richmond, Oliver P. (Ed.) *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*. London: Palgrave, 154-174.

UN, United Nations (2010) "UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation" September 2010, ([http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peacebuilding\\_orientation.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peacebuilding_orientation.pdf)), [May 16th 2012].

UN, United Nations Peacekeeping Department (2008) "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines" ([http://pbpu.unlb.org/PBPS/Library/Capstone\\_Doctrine\\_ENG.pdf](http://pbpu.unlb.org/PBPS/Library/Capstone_Doctrine_ENG.pdf)), [04th May 2009].