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## Hyperpower as a post-Westphalian international environment management hub

### Abstract

The issue of managing the late-Westphalian international environment, especially in the phase of a deep and accelerated qualitative transformation, is among one of the most intensely analyzed by the scientific community. Many models are considered by different scholars, ranging from imperial models to multi-level management models. One of the forms of managing international relations and a tool of power projection can be the form called a hyperpower. It is a unique subjective structure including a core in the form of a superpower and a network of connections and decision-making chains – formal as well as informal – functioning in the transnational social space. This system is situated as an intermediate form between empire and hegemony. It is distinguished from the former by flexibility and softness, from the latter – by international legitimacy that goes beyond the mere recognition of effectiveness in managing global affairs. Its functioning can be traced on the example of three most important functions: sanction, indoctrination, and legitimization.

**Key words:** hyperpower, United States, power, international environment

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## Hyperpower as a post-Westphalian international environment management hub

Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, international relations scholars have been engaged in debates concerning the growing urgency for redefining the scope, structures and functions of international environment. This situation has occurred mainly thanks to changes occurring within the deep undercurrents of civilization – so-called megatrends.<sup>1</sup> The observed change embraces transition from the classical form of international environment known as Westphalian,<sup>2</sup> existing since 1648. Its predominant feature is dualism present in every aspect of social relations, for instance between national and international law.<sup>3</sup> As a next generation of the international environment is taking shape, this dualism is slowly modified to the point where both orders will overlap and interpenetrate themselves. A manifestation of this phenomenon may be the emergence of numerous, ephemeral forms of political and social organizations functioning at the intersection of both spheres. The area of activity of those actors – formal and semi-formal – will cover a number of legal, political and

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<sup>1</sup> The term was introduced to the science of international relations by John Naisbitt. Currently, it is used to describe universal tendencies that shape the international order at the highest social level (civilization). Different researchers identify and name different megatrends: J. Naisbitt distinguishes 10 of them, P. Kennedy - 7, National Defense Council report (Global Trends 2015) - 7, H. McRae - 5; M. Perczyński - 4, and J. Pajestka - 2. On the other hand, B. Balcerowicz distinguished 6 megatrends: globalization, IT revolution, uneven demographic explosion, threats to the natural environment, systemic transformation - in the economic (capitalism) and political (democratization) domains - and also the clash of civilizations. More: Balcerowicz (2002): 85 – 118.

<sup>2</sup> Gross (1948): 20 – 41.

<sup>3</sup> Seaulac (2004): 181 – 213.

social mechanisms enabling external interference in the national constitutional order.<sup>4</sup> One of the entities, predominant, and the most potent of those actors is a hyperpower.

This concept may be confusing, as it has been coined very recently and bears strong resemblance to the notion of a superpower, relating mainly to a specific category of an extremely potent state.<sup>5</sup> This concept defines a new quality of international environment, introducing a different set of constructs and fulfilling different set of functions than the classical, Westphalian international institutions. The issue of its essence and composition will be subject of this paper. The analysis will focus on three variables: national component, transnational component, and functions. First, it is the role of the national component, which is the nation-state, one of the most potent examples of the category of a superpower or world power. Nowadays, the role of the center of a hyperpower is strongly held by United States of America. Although there are voices stating that its position is deteriorating, the consensus assumes that a change at this position will not be disputed, at least in the mid-term perspective. Second, it is the role of the transnational component in the form of a network of transnational connections between the hyperpower's center and other elements of international environment. This is an essence of the new quality of this phenomenon: the existence of a transnational avatar of a hyperpower which magnifies the classical attributes of a power and creates a new set of hyperpower vulnerabilities, unseen with respect to more classical actors. Third, it is also the function of a hyperpower in the international environment, as well

<sup>4</sup> *Praworządność w Polsce i na Węgrzech: sytuacja pogarsza się: komunikat prasowy* (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Fox (1944).

as its role and contribution to the transformation of the Westphalian international environment into the next-generation international environment. In the conclusion to this article, a forecast of further development of the hyperpower institution in the future will be presented.

The research aim of the article is to present the definition of a hyperpower in the framework of the late-Westphalian international environment and beyond. In this context, the following elements will be presented: definition, components and functions. This notion will be compared with similar, historical concepts, such as an empire and hegemony. Two research hypotheses will be subjected to verification. The first one will refer to the nature of a hyperpower, which in its structure includes the construction of a complete balance between the tools for shaping international geopolitical reality and for shaping transnational social reality. The second one concerns the basic mechanism of the functioning of a hyperpower in the international reality. Unlike the previous forms, it is clearly passive, shaping the perception of other participants in international relations rather than actively formatting actual international relations.

The notion of a hyperpower is one of crucial definitions to explain and analyze the emerging international environment. It combines the features and elements typical of two other forms of management hubs of international relations: one typical of the pre-Westphalian international environment – an empire, and the other typical of the Westphalian international environment – hegemony; but it never corresponds with any of them. This is a new quality of international relations, still under construction as a form of practice and framework for a theoretical analysis. It is based on the theory of the dynamics of power, which assumes continuous

unification of formerly separated elements of the Westphalian international environment in the form of a quantum field of power projection. The final issue which needs to be addressed is the question whether the mantle of a hyperpower could be passed onto another international actor. This is a particularly urgent issue, as it will determine the direction of the evolution of the post-Westphalian international environment.

### A hyperpower – the scope of the term

The notion of a hyperpower<sup>6</sup> was introduced to the science of international relations only recently. Initially, it appeared in newspaper articles, commentaries produced by various politicians and to some extent scholars of international relations. With time, it was introduced to the academic discourse.<sup>7</sup> At first glance, this notion could be considered as an empty catch-phrase without any fixed and predefined content. However, with time it proved crucial to analyzing and explaining the international role of the sole survivor of the first generation of the superpowers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the United States of America. It is an important concept in the analysis of its present international status and role of the United States. Initially, they were understood as an example of imperial domination.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The notion of “a hyperpower” was introduced into the science on international relations in the newspaper article written by French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Védrine in 1999: *To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a ‘Hyperpower’*. It was developed and perfected in: Nossal (1999); Cohen (2004); Chua (2007).

<sup>7</sup> The term was introduced into the academic discourse literally: Das (2004); Cohen (2004): 49–63; as well as conceptually, for instance Friedman (2009).

<sup>8</sup> Bender (2004).

However, unlike in the case of colonialism – psychological and social,<sup>9</sup> Marxist<sup>10</sup> and liberal<sup>11</sup> – it can be pointed out that the supremacy of the United States shows four distinguishing features.

First, as regards its ideological basis, it assumes rejecting of exploitation of the peripheries, at least declaratively.<sup>12</sup> This relation was a driving force for European colonial powers. Exploitation was predominantly economic in nature, but soon it was supplemented with a cultural and ideological superstructure. The liberal ideology, governing the foreign policy of the United States, is based on negating the experience of the functioning of the Old World. *Manifest Destiny*<sup>13</sup> assumes that domination is not for political and economic benefits, but leading to liberation and guidance for others. Admittedly, the experience of those who were led and guided may differ from the original intentions. However, this justification was convincing for the American people, who eagerly supported the participation of the United States in subsequent

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<sup>9</sup> The main representative of a psycho-social imperialism is Joseph A. Schumpeter (1883–1950). Czaputowicz (2008): 149–150.

<sup>10</sup> The main representative of Marxist imperialism is Vladimir I. Lenin (Ulyanov) (1870–1924). Ibidem: 146–149.

<sup>11</sup> The main representative of liberal imperialism is John A. Hobson (1858–1940). Ibidem: 145–146.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson.

<sup>13</sup> *Manifest Destiny* is a designation associated with the ideology which explained the external expansion of the United States in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It stemmed from three basic foundations. The first one was the assumption that the US society is a peak achievement of the sociopolitical evolution of mankind. The second was that the United States' political structures are far more effective than other structures around the globe, with particular emphasis given to the Europe. The third was a conviction that there is no other viable path of development than that presented by the United States. More details concerning this project and its criticism: Fresonke (2003).

armed conflicts: the Spanish-American war in 1898,<sup>14</sup> participation in both world wars,<sup>15</sup> and recently also in the war in Iraq in 2003.

Second, United States as a nation was free from the geo-economic need which propelled the European colonization effort. Economic expansion, understood as the quest for new sources of raw materials and markets to sell products of ever growing economies, was one of the basic priorities of colonial powers. While European imperialism was generated by the geo-economic need,<sup>16</sup> the activities of the United States of America were exclusively acts of its collective will. Even today, this nation is characterized by one of the lowest population density compared not only to the developed nations, but also the globe as a whole.<sup>17</sup> This means that a drive for

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<sup>14</sup> The war was fought between April and August of 1898.

<sup>15</sup> In this case motivation was based on the attempt to curb and contain negative powers present on the globe, which inhibited progress in the direction postulated by *Manifest Destiny*. In the former case, the main opponent were the forces of the *ancient régime*, which were associated with Europe in general rather than any particular alliance. The fixed branding of the Central Powers as wrongdoers took place after the sinking of a liner *Lusitania*, which marked the beginning of an unrestricted submarine warfare which endangered the freedom of navigation for neutral powers. In the latter case, US public opinion, reluctant at first, was slowly convinced into active support for participation through associating the Axis Powers as forces of regress, especially after initiating another unrestricted submarine campaign by *Kriegsmarine*.

<sup>16</sup> Contrary to the United States situated on a virgin and unexploited territory, the great powers of Europe occupied relatively small and exploited spaces. Mojsiewicz (2004): 289–290.

<sup>17</sup> Basing on the data presented in the CIA public database, the US population density in 2015 was approximately 32.68 people per square kilometer. The US occupies 181<sup>st</sup> place, between Zimbabwe and Venezuela. For comparison, the average population density for the globe as a whole was 48.72 people per square kilometer (including the oceans and the Antarctica), 48.72 people per square kilometer (excluding

gains is a secondary motivator for international operations, as the basic needs of its society could be satisfy with the resources available at home. Additionally, the size of the population is so large that it is possible for the production of goods and services to be absorbed purely by the internal market. Furthermore, the US market is so extensive that it is able to consume the lion's share of the production from other regions of the world, which generates a number of challenges for the American society, especially in the context of the new rivalry with the People's Republic of China.<sup>18</sup>

Third, the status of other elements of the international system, especially first-tier powers, which represent the most important challenge for the hyperpower, is unclear. If they retain their sovereignty within the late-Westphalian international environment,<sup>19</sup> which seems likely, the condition for creating a fully fledged empire will not be met. It is understood as achieving the state of assimilation of the entire known world within one political organism, leaving unknown regions inhabited by barbarians beyond its borders.<sup>20</sup> Such

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the oceans) and 53.78 people per square kilometer (excluding the oceans and the Antarctica). *CIA World Factbook* (2015).

<sup>18</sup> In this place particularly meaningful becomes the concept of *Chimerica*, that is a specific combination of the two states in the economic dimension, which was, however, also translated into the issues of politics. Szumowski, (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Pietras (2008): 57–74; Kondrakiewicz (2008): 249–271; Panas (2014): 51–68.

<sup>20</sup> The empire is defined as a political entity which embraces the whole world. This means this entity's limits are the results of a power balance within its central elements, which express the cost-effectiveness of expanding those limits. Whenever this limit is exceeded this means a serious challenge for the imperial core in a process called *imperial overstretch*. In this context, a hyperpower displays similar characteristics. It encompasses all of the international relations system; however,

a state was achieved in the case of the Roman or Chinese empires. Today, the only area that is not used economically, politically and militarily is the interplanetary void, and also in this sphere there are areas important for the modern empire: for example, La Grange points in the Earth-Luna system.<sup>21</sup> An additional element is also the fact that there are dynamic boundaries of space available for development by various social groups, not only in the physical dimension, but above all within the constantly generated and regenerated transnational space. The key issue is that despite its role and predominance in the international environment, the United States did not manage to mold sovereignties of other nations into a joint global political system, as it happened in the case of global economy.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, unless political integration of the globe is completed, at least to the extente proposed by Amin Malouf,<sup>23</sup> the required condition to create an actual empire will not be met.

Fourth, there is no emperor in the modern empire understood as an individual or a group of people equipped with legitimacy and competences to make decisions on behalf

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the level of political control is limited to the point when there could be sovereignty displayed within the system.

<sup>21</sup> For each system made up of three objects (two objects and a so-called test object), there are five such points, generally designated L1 through L5. Points L1 – L3 are on a line through the object of the system and are unstable. Points L4 and L5 together with both objects form an equilateral triangle and are linearly stable, but a certain level of instability is retained. Stability in this case means that if the object has motion parameters that do not differ much from the parameters of a point, it will stay around this point for as long as possible. Instability means that the object will move away from the libration point. More details: Cornish (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Czaputowicz (2008): 159.

<sup>23</sup> Maalouf (2011).

the empire as a whole, or a social group that pursues personal ambitions and social interests that fuels imperial expansion. It is difficult to identify and distinguish the above-mentioned entities in the society and history of the United States,. There are even doubts that a hyperpower is managed by official authorities of a superpower being in the core of the whole system. However, a natural candidate for the potential leader of a hyperpower is the President of United States. There were two persons taking this office which were closest to initiate transformation into an actual empire. The first was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt,<sup>24</sup> who held the office from 1933 to 1945.<sup>25</sup> The second was George Walker Bush Jr., who held the office between 2000 and 2008. His presidency encompassed response to one of the most traumatic events for the American society: the attack on the World Trade Center.<sup>26</sup> According to Salvatore Babones' analysis, it is the period of Bush's presidency that the imperial potential in real international action could be realized<sup>27</sup>.

The United States, especially since the end of the Cold War, has escaped the classical scientific framework of analysis. For this reason, scholars are looking for notions and ideas which will correspond with the results of the analysis

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<sup>24</sup> In 1945, the United States was merely a developed nation with the territory largely untouched by the consequences of World War II, its industrial output amounting to over 50% of global industrial output, the largest standing army and in exclusive possession of a nuclear weapons platform. Kennedy (1995): 351–352.

<sup>25</sup> Time limits for United States presidency - ten years in office (two full terms, and a margin for unexpected promotion of vice-president) – were introduced by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment in 1951.

<sup>26</sup> Krebs, Lobasz (2007): 409–451.

<sup>27</sup> This was the main thesis of a lecture delivered on 28 September 2015 at the Political Science Faculty of Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland.

of the empirical qualities of this nation. Two concepts seem to be particularly promising. The first is the concept of hegemony taken over from the Chinese school of international relations.<sup>28</sup> The second is the concept of a hyperpower, introduced by the French branch of the Western theory of international relations<sup>29</sup>.

In the context of Chinese history and political science, hegemony is the institution equipped in capabilities and legitimacy to forcefully gain and secure access to the required resources which are in the possession of lower-level geopolitical units. This is a flashback of the legendary first Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huang, who ruthlessly exploited his domain to the brink of rebellion.<sup>30</sup> In addition, hegemony has tools to moderate public discourse derived from moral and philosophical principles, religious and ideological beliefs and tenets derived from a cultural context. An additional challenge is the reinterpretation of one's own strategy of achieving political goals in relation to the imposed way of perceiving reality.<sup>31</sup> The politicians of the People's Republic of China viewed the alliance shift of 1970 in this dimension, and seeing themselves as junior partners in this coalition, were highly reluctant to deposit their own fate in the hands of an external

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<sup>28</sup> Mosher (2007): 21–22.

<sup>29</sup> Védrine (1999).

<sup>30</sup> Mosher (2007): 50.

<sup>31</sup> An outline of the basic development path of the Chinese theory of international relations has been sketched on the basis of the conclusions of the panel *Chinese International Relations Theory: Re-Configuration and Internationalization of International Relations in the Shadow of Global Crises* chaired by Professor Nele Noesselt, held under the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Conference on International Relations. *One International Relations or Many? Multiple Worlds, Multiple Crises*, organized on 17- 21 September 2013.

entity, and thus becoming dependent on realization of the hegemon's particular interests. This can be clearly seen in the example of the United States' war on terrorism in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which led to destabilization of the global situation, which has been affecting their allies till today. The goals of hegemony always prevail in this theory, and are materialized at the expense of junior partners.

A slightly milder form of hegemony is described by the concept of the tributary system presented by Yuen Foong Khong.<sup>32</sup> In his theory, the key element is the tributary system. This is a hierarchical organized entity of various strata, connected by the ties of a normative nature, which could be described as subordination. It includes a number of participants of the international community, connected in a formalized and hierarchical, permanent and ritualistic way. There are two basic principles to this system. The first is that the hegemon's interference is limited only to the formal requirement of a declaration of participation in the system. Second, the major part of resource flows and recognition is directed from the center towards the peripheries. In this context, the hegemon is referred to as "benevolent" as it requires the peripheral elements almost exclusively to participate in certain rituals.

Summing up, the basic definition of the concept can be formulated as a new mode of management of the contemporary international system situated between hegemony and empire. Due to contextual differences, both notions are associated with past iterations of the international environment. It includes features and flows, which could be associated with both of them. Therefore, a hyperpower is located between empire and hegemony, without military dominance of the former

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<sup>32</sup> Khong (2013): 1–47.

but with legal grounds denied for the latter. However the full extent of this institution is yet to be uncovered.

### **Hyperpower – constitutive elements**

Most scientists dealing with the issue of defining the term hyperpower emphasize two dimensions of the phenomenon. First, it is its quantitative nature. There is still a debate going on in the scientific community as to whether the United States meets the requirements for holding this position in the international system.<sup>33</sup> Most of them are variables of a quantitative nature, which are visible mainly in the economic and military spheres. In this context, while military domination is not questioned, the economic position of the United States of America is subject to reconsideration, especially in the context of the great financial crisis of 2008, which began with the collapse of the American financial markets.<sup>34</sup> Second, it is also its role in international relations, which is a derivative of the functions fulfilled by United States for the rest of the global community. At least two opposing opinions could be identified. On the one hand, there is the statement made by Andrew Bacevich,<sup>35</sup> who sees the hyperpower United States of America as a threat not only to stability and world peace, but above all to the delicate political mechanisms which constitute the unique nature and character of democracy practiced in the United States of America. In this context, exercising the function of a global hegemony entails loss of prestige due to disasters, errors and losses resulting from international

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<sup>33</sup> Kondrakiewicz (2015): 219–241.

<sup>34</sup> The symbolic beginning of the crisis of 2008 was the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment bank on 15 September 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Bacevich (2011).

involvement. On the other extreme, there are the concepts put forth by Salvatore Babones and George Friedmann, who emphasize the need to play the role of a global power in order to effectively protect national interests and a favorable balance of power in the international environment. Therefore, a hyperpower was created by the unipolar moment present in the United States' recent history. The question about the efficiency of seizing this moment need to be left unanswered, at least for now.

Most Western scholars seem to agree that hyperpowerhood is based on the conjunction of the three spheres of activity of the subject in the international environment. First, there are military capabilities.<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, what distinguishes the military capabilities of the hyperpower is not the extremely effective ability to use military force, but a sufficiently developed potential in this field that even defeat on the battlefield can contribute to the achievement of the political goals set in the government's strategy. The key issue for the US hyperpower position seems to be its resistance to military defeats, while maintaining a sufficient number of remaining segments for effective power projection in other areas of influence. The most important reason for the defeat of the United States may be societal sensitivity to losses: both own and that of the enemy. This situation is contrary to an empire, which could absorb tremendous casualties without the need to concede defeat as Rome proved during a series of conflicts known as the Punic Wars.

Second, it is also an economic position. In most cases, this dimension is understood as exercising political control over

<sup>36</sup> The entire operation was carried out between 17 January and 28 February 1991. Operation *Desert Storm* officially ended on 30 November 1995.

a significant segment of the global economy, most often expressed as a percentage of gross global production. However, as in the previous point, the economic dimension of hyperpowerhood is visible above all in qualitative participation in the world economy. And also by drawing on the so-called hegemonic rent,<sup>37</sup> i.e. an additional income generated from managing the world economy. This is the element of most disputed nature. The events of 2008 aroused doubts about the domination of the United States in the global economy. However, one thing needs to be mentioned. Its international position in the global economy is also qualitative in nature, and needs to be analyzed also in terms of the relations between national economies which are designed to retain the US economy in the center of the system.

Third, it is the realm of culture. The area of culture should be divided into two sub-spheres. The first one concerns the legitimacy of a superpower as a norm-creating entity shaping the principles and mechanisms regulating the international reality. The whole issue is based on the challenge of legitimizing the position of the hyperpower on the level of a normative power, described in more detail in the previous chapter. The second is undoubtedly the cultural mimicry of the lifestyle of a hyperpower society. This mimicry covers three basic ranges. Firstly, it is the sphere of values as well

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<sup>37</sup> The concept is quite vague and defined differently by various scholars. In most cases hegemonic rent means additional profits obtained by exercising the function of a hegemon. Although in the scientific community there is no consensus on the exact content to this notion. There are various dimensions of it ranging from the political domination of the international system, which means the possibility of initiation and implementation of complex political projects to the subconscious influence of deciding about accepted patterns of behaviours according to normative Power as defined by Ian Manners.

as philosophical and, to some extent, religious systems, which are transferred into the international and transnational space, and thus recombined within individual political units, partially resembling them, but in most cases leading to grotesque effects. Secondly, it is the sphere of the codes of higher culture, or rather the tools necessary for their effective reading. In the case of a hyperpower, this knowledge is more widely distributed, which makes it possible to read and internalize the message on a much larger scale within the mimicry of the lifestyle. Third, it is also a question of popular culture, related to such issues as fashion, entertainment and consumer behavior. It is an element of culture almost completely devoid of a national context, it is extremely easy to decode and imitate, but in practice its reproduction is related to the perception of the source of mass culture. In summary, the category of hyperpower is still extremely difficult to identify and analyze. However one thing needs to be mentioned. In this scope, hyperpower is recognized as a role model for the rest of the global civil society, which remains to be vulnerable to the transmission of values carried out by state and non-state means.

In the context of discussing the subject of hyperpower, of key importance becomes the answer to the question about the nature of the entity corresponding with the hyperpower criterion, and more specifically with regard to the continuity of the internal category of the state. Paradoxically, it can be said that hyperpower is a category that is located above the state, and between hegemony and empire. As a result, it is deprived of a large part of the mechanisms supporting expansion to the limits of the known world; on the other hand, its position and internal mechanisms distinguish a country belonging to this category from others, even the largest ones.

In essence, the hyperpower is the whole system in which the superpower is located, but it goes beyond its own borders and reaches almost every corner of the Earth, using formal and informal networks of transnational connections, supported by state and non-state participants in international relations. Unlike an empire, which is able to operate in an active phase in an international environment, a hyperpower is mostly a passive entity, the activation of which consumes enormous amounts of resources and, as a process, is rarely successful. Therefore, its existence depends predominantly on external recognition of the remaining members of the global community. Thus, a natural inclination is that its existence requires consumption of a significant portion of resources produced worldwide.

In the case of the United States being a hyperpower, its activation has happened twice in contemporary history. For the first time, during the United Nations' intervention during the Korean war in 1950–1953. It was possible mainly due to the self-exclusion of the Soviet Union and its satellite states from the international decision-making process, which allowed for the mobilization of the resources of the hyperpower and for an effective intervention.<sup>38</sup> The second time it happened during the First Gulf War in 1990–1991, when an international coalition carried out an operation first to secure Saudi Arabia's sovereignty as part of Operation Desert Shield,<sup>39</sup> and then to destroy the forces occupying Kuwait also as part of Operation Desert Storm<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Stueck (2002).

<sup>39</sup> This operation was a response to the occupation of Kuwait by the Iraqi army (2–4 August 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Tanner (2007): 81–106.

As a result, the existence of a hyperpower made it possible to carry out complex and sophisticated political and military operations efficiently and effectively without overburdening the nation – the state located in the center of the hyperpower. Nonetheless, in most of the remaining cases, the United States did not make any effort to mobilize the majority, if not all connections of this system, as was the case with point campaigns in Latin America, such as in the case of Panama.<sup>41</sup> Either its efforts ended in a failure, a spectacular example of which was the Second Gulf War, started in 2003,<sup>42</sup> or it was unable to effectively use the accumulated potential, which was the case with the Vietnam War in 1955–1975<sup>43</sup>. Thus, in most instances the hyperpower remains passive, as its activation requires additional portions of resources, skills of the central government and involvement of other actors of the international community.

The hyperpower system is located between two historically existing levels of international actors. The first is the empire, which is a model of rigid management. The key to distinguishing between imperial models is their social legitimacy. The Roman Empire was based on the assimilation of the elite, symbolized by the widely known figure of Saint Paul of Tarsus, a Jewish national who obtained Roman citizenship as an individual particularly useful for the interests of Rome. In this approach, legitimacy was expressed mainly through the recognition by higher social spheres of Rome's

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<sup>41</sup> Ibidem: 41–60.

<sup>42</sup> Despite having designated the international forces occupying Iraq after 2003 as a coalition, it was disproportionately smaller and therefore more asymmetric than the corresponding coalition formed in 1990. The largest nations, apart from the United States, are Great Britain (second-tier power) as well as Poland and Spain (medium-sized nations).

<sup>43</sup> Summers (1993).

superiority over local authorities.<sup>44</sup> The opposite of this model was the Chinese model, in which central power was based primarily on assimilation of the lower strata of the society after conquest and extermination of the leadership.<sup>45</sup>

The second is hegemony, which according to George Modelski<sup>46</sup> is similar to the concept of global leadership formulated by contemporary scientists.<sup>47</sup> Political and military domination is not directly translated into the shape of the system, as additional legitimization is required from other participants in international relations. In this context, this system is more flexible than the empire. This function is derived from the efficiency of its operations, as no actor is capable of assuming rigid global domination similar to the empire. Therefore, this mode assumes that the most powerful entity present will be capable only of disrupting initiatives aimed at undermining the position of the hegemon. However, positive initiatives need to be reinforced by initiatives and support of other members of the international community.

### **Hyperpower –functions in the international environment**

The biggest innovation of a hyperpower is what types of functions it fulfills within the framework of the global

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<sup>44</sup> In this context, officials such as proconsuls, prosecutors or provincial governors, who performed their functions on behalf of the emperor and senate, to some extent represent these institutions in relation to local government institutions and client entities, are of particular importance.

<sup>45</sup> Mosher (2007): 61.

<sup>46</sup> Modelski (1987). The theory has also been subject to criticism and numerous modifications, and has become a permanent part of modern strategic thought.

<sup>47</sup> Nye (2008). Even later publications such as Friedman (2012), are constructed on the basic assumption of the personal leadership of individual global decision makers as its determining factor.

international environment. There is an important common feature for empire, hegemony and hyperpower: all of them exert a decisive impact on whole system, not only a single part or layer. Having said that, it needs to be underlined that this impact is very different. Within the imperial system, this influence is overwhelming, legitimate and justified, and without a viable alternative. Within the hegemonic system, this influence is barely visible, legitimized by its efficiency and highly contested. Within the hyperpower system, this influence combines the features mentioned above, paradoxically combining strengths and vulnerabilities. It is overwhelming, but rather hidden beneath the surface, thus barely visible. It is legitimate when it comes to the existing procedures and decisions; however, those procedures assume a high level of discourse and argumentation. And, above all, it seems that a hyperpower relies more on its reception by the peripheries rather than the actual performance of its core. Moreover, a hyperpower persists despite having suffered a defeat and its vulnerability to casualties. Summarizing, a hyperpower is impressively bolstered by contemporary technologies and cyberspace, but it is also persuasive in nature and passive. This could be visible in a variety of forms a hyperpower manifest itself in.

The potential of a hyperpower can be projected within the contemporary international environment in three major ways: sanction, coordination, and indoctrination. The first feature is typical of historical systems. It assumes the possibility of assessing the activity of other entities and taking action in the event of their inadmissibility in order to compel those entities to adapt to the desired course of action. However, unlike the previous ones, which relied predominantly on plain and obvious coercion, the application of sanctions requires

different strategies and tools, sometimes more targeted, and less obvious. A hyperpower acts rather like a homeostat<sup>48</sup> concerned with an unending quest to balance the simultaneously deteriorating and developing system. In the context of the application of sanctions, a hyperpower depends on efficient functioning of the network of transnational connections, which are bypassing classical tools available to a superpower. As a result, as previously mentioned, a hyperpower is highly susceptible to the cost of sanctions. This means that the contemporary environment limits the independence of a hyperpower government as regards its powers, empowering non-governmental organizations, social groups and individual citizens to question the government's course. Therefore, sanctions within a hyperpower are always collectively projected and focused on limiting access of targeted entities to infrastructure, assets, capabilities and territory under the jurisdiction of a hyperpower and its allies.<sup>49</sup>

The key factor, when it comes to implementing and executing sanctions, is the extensive CNN effect that allows not only, in accordance with its creator's intent, to deform the will of the undecided political elite<sup>50</sup>, but also to exert pressure to change the established policy, or to change the government composition in the case of its persistent support

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<sup>48</sup> According to the dictionary a homeostat is: "a cybernetic machine constituting a system composed of a series of regulators imitating homeostasis." On the other hand, homeostasis is: "the ability of a living organism to maintain a relatively constant state of equilibrium, for example blood composition or temperature, through appropriate coordination and regulation of life processes," *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN* (1983).

<sup>49</sup> In most cases those sanctions are related to global financial markets, which in their vastness are created by the hyperpower center.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson (2006): 30–32.

of the questioned policy. In the case of the implementation of sanctions by the hyperpower, it should be noted that it has a much wider range of possibilities, in which military sanctions are not the most important, but most demanding in terms of limitations and costs. An ideal example is the Ukrainian crisis, the main obstacle to the political and military activity of the Russian Federation not so much by military intervention of the United States, but by the prospect of cutting off the banking sector from the system of the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, SWIFT,<sup>51</sup> created to facilitate financial transactions between national financial market institutions.

To sum up, the hyperpower has a much more developed, but at the same time much softer, range of sanctions to be applied in the international environment. In addition, these sanctions are very rarely employed - both in terms of making decisions and as part of their implementation - unilaterally by the central state of the system. In most cases, they are the resultant of the interests of entities located at various levels of the hyperpower, not only of a national but also non-state nature. Examples include the sanctions imposed on Iran

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<sup>51</sup> This association was founded in 1973 in Brussels as a union of financial institutions with the objective of creating a common communication network used for financial purposes. Currently, SWIFT brings together over nine thousand financial institutions and transfers over fifteen million messages a day. More details on the Association's website: [www.swift.com](http://www.swift.com). However, there are often issues of compromising network security, as a part of which unauthorized messages are delivered. The most serious case of this type took place in February 2016, when hackers placed transfer orders from the Bank of Bangladesh in the SWIFT system for a total amount of US\$ 971 million. From this, transfers of US\$ 101 million were made, of which US\$ 38 million was recovered. Byron (2016). Moreover, there have also been many smaller heists in various banks around the world: Metzger (2016).

to force out elimination of the military elements from the nuclear program,<sup>52</sup> the sanctions imposed on Russia to persuade it to resolve the conflict in the Crimea and its eastern neighbors,<sup>53</sup> including participation in the sinking of a corvette belonging to the Republic of Korea Navy, and a hacking attack on servers owned by Sony Pictures.<sup>54</sup> The general direction is to reduce destructiveness only to the necessary level. As a consequence, the hyperpower in this context assumes the trait of Chinese imperialism, mainly in the dimension of its ritualism.

The second level of power projection is coordination of various activities and initiatives which take place within the contemporary international system. This is a derivative of the shift along the axis of authority that shapes the quantum field of the manifestation of power in the late-Westphalian international environment. The result of the aforementioned change is the need to confirm the legitimacy of international initiatives and limit the possibility of using direct coercive

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<sup>52</sup> Within the framework of *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCOPA), Persian مادقا عاج مانرب (BARJAM), signed on 14 July 2015 in Vienna, when the deal provided for serious limitation and slowing down of the Iranian nuclear program, especially in terms of research and development initiatives and resigning from stockpiles of enriched uranium in exchange for releasing assets frozen within the critical infrastructure under the supervision of the United States, estimated for US\$ 100 quadrillion. Full text available on URL = <http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas>.

<sup>53</sup> *Sankcje i Rosja* (2015). Additionally, sanctions are restricted to a deliberately prescribed time. After the deadline, the activity of the targeted regime is assessed and sanctions are either lifted or reaffirmed. Last reaffirmation of sanctions took place on 16 December 2020. *Sankcje wobec Rosji. Unijni ambasadorowie poparli ich przedłużenie* (2020).

<sup>54</sup> USA nakładają kolejne sankcje na Koreę Północną. To odpowiedź na cyberatak (2015).

measures in a drive to promote individual points of view. As a result, the role of the central actor of the hyperpower is changing. From the center that gives orders - and enforces obedience - the hyperpower changes into a center for harmonizing international activities and initiatives. An extremely flexible, though fuzzy structure is created, which allows the achievement of the goals of the hyperpower center by creating structures and metastructures that limit the possibility of undertaking activities inconsistent with the values of the hyperpower.

This function of a hyperpower in the late-Westphalian international environment arises from the theory of "benign hegemony" coined and developed by Bob Catley.<sup>55</sup> In this context, based on the theory of hegemony, the United States stands out from the historical powers by two features: gentleness and self-limitation,<sup>56</sup> especially as regards the use of violence. However, most analysts of the phenomenon point out that this feature of the United States has been visible only in the last thirty years, marked by a high degree of pacification of the international environment.<sup>57</sup> It remains an open question whether in a more turbulent phase of development of the international environment these limitations would remain binding for the hyperpower's activities. Despite these similarities, it should be noted that the concept of hyperpower shows two qualitative differences. The first is the omission of the second element of a hyperpower, that is, the network of transnational ties that developed with the evolution of the late-Westphalian international environment. The second is underestimating the fact of the mutual interpenetration

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<sup>55</sup> Catley (1997): 377–399.

<sup>56</sup> Kupchan (1998): 46.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem: 41.

of individual international entities, led by a hyperpower. As a result, the theory in question applies to a specific, yet classically understood foreign policy of the United States, seen as a nation-state - powerful, but not qualitatively distinct from the rest of this collection. Paradoxically, in many cases, it has resulted in a failure to achieve short-term goals, which could be seen in the spectacular failure of the US policy towards Iraq after 2003. A regularly recurring circumstance is that the US government is losing international disputes and conflicts, which generates a conviction about the decline of American power, which is present in the science of international relations among both American<sup>58</sup> and European scientists.<sup>59</sup> However, it seems that the signs of the waning US leadership in the world are in fact indicating that the single surviving superpower is turning into a hyperpower. Its most important element is the change of the form of leadership: from giving orders towards synchronization and coordination of the initiatives of other entities. Such a location and understanding of the center of the hyperpower has two consequences.

First, coordination does not require initiating international action. Moreover, it seems that the initiation of activities in the hyperpower system by entities of a lower rank is not so much possible as desirable. This is due to the imminent drive to reduce costs – both in the economic area and in the ideological and legislative dimension. However, in this context, it should be pointed out that the role of the hyperpower core cannot be limited only to participation or passivity. An event such as the Syrian civil war, with varying intensity going on since 2011,<sup>60</sup> requires initiative from the center

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<sup>58</sup> Fry (2010).

<sup>59</sup> Joffe (2014).

<sup>60</sup> Jenkins (2016).

of the entire system. In many cases the urge to initiate some activities is vocalized by secondary and tertiary power centers of the hyperpower. In the absence of any initiative - or even worse consistency<sup>61</sup> - at the center of the system, initiatives of the international community will prove ineffective as different secondary centers seem to promote diverse solutions. As a result of the United States' withdrawal from the role of the global coordinator, the international community has lost the required level of coherence, exacerbating rather than managing the challenges generated by the conflict in Syria.

Second, this function makes it possible to reduce the costs of managing the international environment for various actors in the international environment. Through allocating tasks to different, specialized entities involved in making and implementing international decisions, the resources of a hyperpower are not wasted. The biggest challenge is to avoid micromanagement of international activities, as it would not only compromise the activity but also create enormous resentment of abused organizations. It also employs actors with unique knowledge and capabilities necessary to take effective action by the group of decision-makers. For this reason, coordination of the hyperpower system most often manifests itself in the formation of the so-called coalition of the willing.

The reduction of costs within these coalitions is achieved through the following three processes. The first one is to involve in the international decision-making process those entities the implementation of the initiative by which is of greatest importance. Similar patterns can also be seen at the level

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<sup>61</sup> *Obama obrywa za Syrię. Rosja i Iran nie boją się USA* (2016); Ball (2012).

of the hyperpower core as a consequence of the military victory over the Republic of Iraq in 2003 and protracted occupation, gradual build-up of rebellion and passive resistance from other participants in the international community.<sup>62</sup> Another pattern is illustrated by the financial crisis of 2008,<sup>63</sup> one of the most important consequences of which is that the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Western model of development collectively, referred to as Washington consensus, were exposed.<sup>64</sup> The second process is gaining access to the resources necessary to carry out effective exercise of power in the international environment. Securing access to know-how necessary for the correct and optimal exercise of power in the situational context becomes of particular importance. The key to this process is to understand the diversity of contemporary international relations, both in terms of the cultural context of the activities undertaken, resulting from the late-Westphalian activation of non-Western cultural complexes, and in the objective dimension of the instruments of operation in international relations. This is one of the most important features of a hyperpower. The reversal of the principle of the hegemon's activity in favor of a kind of passivity serves to hide the hyperpower – and its core – behind the direct executors of individual international initiatives. The use of qualitatively different entities, both in terms of strategy development and its implementation, in fact allows for a dramatic reduction of the costs of international activity, increasing the probability of obtaining the desired results, as well as their consolidation in the international reality. It displays

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<sup>62</sup> Kaldor (2006): 150–177.

<sup>63</sup> Madej (2011).

<sup>64</sup> Stiglitz (2003): 33–40; Trinidad (2006): 973–987. And after the collapse of financial system in 2008: Birdsall, Fukuyama (2011).

negative strategic and operational consequences, however. The most important challenge is the struggle to incorporate their objectives into the hyperpower agenda.

A recent example may be the struggle between the United States of America and the Republic of Turkey concerning the way of tackling the emerging ISIS threat. In the geopolitical perspective, Turkey is considered to be a geopolitical pin,<sup>65</sup> representing the West in the Middle East. The entirety of Turkish policy towards Syria has already been subject to a number of analytical studies.<sup>66</sup> However, in the context of its functioning in the late-Westphalian international environment, its importance as one of the most vital access points to the so-called Eurasian Balkans should be emphasized. Any action initiated by a hyperpower in order to manage the Syrian conflict needs to embrace Turkish interests, particularly as regards Kurdish organizations in and around Turkey.<sup>67</sup> This conflict within the structures of the hyperpower should be considered. The political situation is complicated further by the presence and actions of those segments of the hyperpower which are contesting the role of the current core. In other words – Russia. This was the case with Turkey in November 2015, when a Russian aircraft taking part in combat operations on the territory of Syria was shot down.<sup>68</sup> Ending the dangerous situation and re-synchronizing the activities of both coalitions consumed subsequent portions of resources and the analytical potential of

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<sup>65</sup> Brzeziński (1999): 48–49.

<sup>66</sup> Smoleń (2014): 107–122; Gunter (2015): 102–111; Hinnebusch (2015): 14–22 or even Aras, Mencutek (2015): 193–208.

<sup>67</sup> Sarr (2019): 278–300.

<sup>68</sup> *Rosyjski bombowiec Su-24 zestrzelony przez Turcję. "Naruszył przestrzeń powietrzną* (2015).

the hyperpower.<sup>69</sup> And its effectiveness is yet to be determined. An additional challenge concerns also the issues related to the understanding of individual terms and tools used in the implementation of sanctions, ensuing from different communication systems, supplemented with different philosophical and religious principles, resulting in small but significant differences in the understanding of the common strategy. As a result, the actions expected by the coordinator differ from their understanding by the contractor. This is particularly evident in the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, especially in the context of mutual negotiations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China.<sup>70</sup>

The third process involves equalization of cost distribution of the undertaken initiatives, without diminishing the potential of the hyperpower core. The remaining elements of the hyperpower system are tasked with covering their respective parts of joint investments. In cash, as well as in kind. As a reward, those entities are entitled to participate in the decision-making process and allocated their share in benefits, although in most cases they are not directly derived from the mentioned initiative, but are produced and inspired in a different section of the hyperpower system. Activity in the late-Westphalian international environment is becoming a conglomerate of various sorts of prizes which the patrons of the enterprise need to cover. It is required primarily due to complex inter-connectivity, which can sparkle a random generation of consequences in remote areas of the quantum field of power

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<sup>69</sup> Irańscy Strażnicy Rewolucji wypuścili Amerykanów. "Popsuła im się nawigacja" (2016); Niebezpieczny incydent w Syrii: rosyjski myśliwiec na kursie kolizyjnym z amerykańskim samolotem (2016).

<sup>70</sup> Kosta (2004): 300–313.

projection, which require a unique set of skills to be managed efficiently. Given their hybrid nature, the wider is the scope of initiative, the costs tend to increase exponentially.

The third feature of the hyperpower system is the indoctrination of the subordinate participants in the system, which means virtually any other international actor. This mechanism is based predominantly on Ian Manners' idea of normative power.<sup>71</sup> According to the theory of George Modelska,<sup>72</sup> hegemony displays the possibility of binding norms and values of the entire global system towards its own national interests and perspectives. As the hegemonic system evolves into a hyperpower, this capacity only gains in importance and is consequently developed. This particular mechanism is related to the evolution of the environment and a thorough reconfiguration and expansion of the critical infrastructure network,<sup>73</sup> which is the main soft power projection channel and almost exclusively responsible for the application of sanctions and shaping the preferences of normative power application. In the current configuration, it utilizes extensive channels of expressing respect and legitimacy, and is displayed in conjunction with a rather specific system of sanctions, primarily in the social dimension, with particular emphasis on the most effective of the entire range, i.e. name and shame, which assumes ridiculing the trespasser.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, these mechanisms maintain a low profile, but nearly constant and daily activities, which are jointly labeled as a third face of power, according to Kenneth Boulding.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Manners (2002): 235 – 258.

<sup>72</sup> Modelska, Thompson (1996).

<sup>73</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary (2013).

<sup>74</sup> Lenz (2013): 214–215; Braithwaite, Drahos (2002): 269–288.

<sup>75</sup> Boulding (1990): 109 – 124.

They are based on the subconscious projection of patterns and values into the international environment and their equally subconscious integration into own hierarchies of values of other participants of international relations. As a result of this process, other actors are subjected to the process of socialization, consisting in identifying and pressing in certain strictly defined mechanisms of functioning and determining the parameters of acceptable actions. Moreover, the implementation of this pattern consists in practical elimination of the remaining possibilities for the implementation of international relations. The hyperpower presents itself and is perceived at the same time as a solution without alternatives. The broadening rift between those two dimension may be potentially devastating not only to its initiatives, but also to its continuous existence. Nonetheless, being aware of the lack of alternatives allows the hyperpower core to dedicate less resources to managing the entire system, as most of the processes are carried out automatically by individual organisms subjected to such an impact.

Additionally, those mechanisms of belonging can be extremely effective, though very unpredictable. This is mainly due to the need to acquire a conjunction of three volatile factors, which are according to Ian Manners' research, the key to success.<sup>76</sup> First, there are shared values that serve to create a similar cultural context for a homogeneous interpretation of individual activities and initiatives. Second, it is geopolitical proximity understood as strong, transnational links between the participating actors. Third, it is also a shared socio-cultural heritage, ranging from identical institutions to a greater or lesser part of a shared history. The conjunction of all three

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<sup>76</sup> Manners (2002): 244 – 245.

factors occurs relatively rarely in the international environment. Thus, despite considerable efficiency and relatively low costs, this tool rarely produces the desired outcomes. In most known cases, the crucial element of its effectiveness remains perception – and reception – of targeted nations.

On the global scale, this conjunction is extremely difficult to achieve, but the hyperpower is particularly predisposed to do so. First of all, American culture plays an important role here, which is constructed on the basis of two basic paradigms. First, a proportionately large presence of its culture is the content belonging to the sphere of popular or low culture. These elements are the main drivers of the process of unifying consumer behavior on the global scale, constituting the essence of globalization of its cultural path.<sup>77</sup> The second is the primitivity of American culture, obtained either by accident or by design. Nonetheless it results from the social context the American nation comes from, which developed an extremely effective mechanism for incorporation of successive waves of migration from various corners of the world. As a result, it was necessary to develop a model that would be understandable to each of the newcomers, and thus quite drastically simplified, even to the most primitive patterns – such as picture writing (comic books).<sup>78</sup> An unpredictable consequence is that American culture has also become legible to other cultures in places of their domination. To some extent, remaining cultures and subcultures to various extent relate to those patterns, either absorbing or rejecting them.

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<sup>77</sup> Pietras (2007): 579.

<sup>78</sup> Sarfati, Hardy-Baylé, Besche, Widlöcher (1997): 199–209. There is also evidence of transmitting a more complex content and values, even addressed to children and adolescents.

In addition, the United States, as a hyperpower, maintains an important presence on the regional scale in many areas of the world, both in the factual (the Persian Gulf region), institutional (NATO) and normative (Eastern Europe) dimensions. It is not a distant entity, but rather keen on shortening distances whether it will be manageable and possible. Therefore, its presence has become much more internalized on the institutional and individual level than before. This effect is achieved mainly due to the branched system of various non-state entities of the hyperpower, which eliminates the problem of geographical distance. As a result, in an overwhelming number of cases, ranging from participation in wars to hosting the military bases, and from trade negotiations to the spread of American pop culture, the United States is treated if not as a neighboring state, then a close one.

### **Hyperpower – international future**

Summarizing the above discussion about the nature of hyperpower, three basic conclusions should be articulated. First, it is a system that combines the features of both hegemony and empire, their strengths as well as weaknesses. As a result, it represents a new quality of the international environment. On one hand, it is one of the largest systems existing in the modern world, connecting through long decision-making chains the center with the entire international system, i.e. the United States of America, secondary participants in the state system, international organizations, corporations and transnational enterprises, and non-governmental organizations. On the other, the entire hyperpower system can be described by juxtaposing three paradoxes: passivity, sensitivity, and the demand for assets.

The first paradox indicates that the system, although extensive and extremely complex, is in fact a passive one. Since its inception, it has been possible only twice to mobilize the greater part of the system as a result of the initiative of its decision-making center. The second paradox indicates that despite the incomparable status vis-à-vis other entities in this category and the potential directly or indirectly covering most of the resources, a hyperpower is much more sensitive to losses than an empire or hegemony, especially in the dimension of its social sensitivity to collateral damages and casualties – its own as well as those of its foes. By comparison, the most serious defeat of the US Army since the symbolic establishment of the hyperpower in 1945 occurred during the military conflict in Vietnam that continued from 1957 to 1975,<sup>79</sup> with serious internal repercussions and a decline in morale. The third paradox is asset consumption in order to maintain its further existence. This demand is particularly painful for the hyperpower core during the process of its full activation. The costs of managing the system as a whole, or even the comprehensive activation of most of its mechanisms gradually, go beyond the capabilities of the decision-making center. Thus in order to operate efficiently secondary actors – national as well as non-national – have to be employed, which raises the cost, at the expense of compromising certain objectives, which need to be abandoned or embraced, depending on their individual demands. This translates also into the evolution of the United States' hierarchy of preferences, which virtually eliminates the possibility of serious unilateral actions. Of course, the costs of activity are not constant for the entire period, oscillating on the basis of the will of other

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<sup>79</sup> Lau, Brown, Sears (1978): 464–482.

entities to accept global leadership. As a result, the United States learned to form so-called coalitions of the willing and with their help to manage the entire international system.

The scientific community remains divided as to the future of the hyperpower model.<sup>80</sup> Some scholars and politicians lean toward the opinion of Zbigniew Brzeziński that the contemporary international environment does not prefer such central management and that the United States is the last actor to develop these capabilities, and its eventual demise means a downfall of this type of construction.<sup>81</sup> Others, like Andrew Bacevich, add that today we are witnessing the decline of the role of the United States as the global hegemony beyond the capacity to recover.<sup>82</sup> Others, however, such as George Friedman, argue that the decline of American power is neither as swift nor as certain as pessimists seem to assume.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, comprehensive studies of international relations conducted by Paul Kennedy<sup>84</sup> and George Modelska<sup>85</sup> show that the tendency to the cyclical accumulation of power in international relations is extremely deeply rooted in the nature of the political activity of large social groups. In fact, some of those studies indicate that in certain circumstances those entities can withstand a crisis designed to push the mantle of leadership toward a different actor. As a result, even in spite of the phases of decline and disintegration, so far there has always been a return to centralization of power at the global level in every phase of the international sys-

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<sup>80</sup> Kondrakiewicz (2015): 219–241.

<sup>81</sup> Brzeziński (1999): 213–219; Brzeziński (2013): 67–79.

<sup>82</sup> Bacevich (2011): 224–226.

<sup>83</sup> Friedman (2009): 281–285; Kagan (2021),

<sup>84</sup> Kennedy (1995): 495–515.

<sup>85</sup> Modelska (1988): 97–132.

tem. Additionally, as Salvatore Babones points out, the center of the international environment may surface in a different, unpredictable place in the world today. More importantly, the next hyperpower center may even show legitimate ties to the modern United States<sup>86</sup> in a manner comparable to that of Byzantium's genetic ties with Rome.

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<sup>86</sup> Babones (2005).

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