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### **Hegemony in Contemporary World Politics**

This paper is the draft introduction to a book on *(Re)imagining Hegemonies*.<sup>\*</sup> The volume – and this paper as a summary of its core issues – asks how we should understand hegemony in world politics of the twenty-first century. A first part of the paper develops a general concept of hegemony as ‘legitimated rule by dominant power’. In other words, world hegemony combines: (a) concentrated control of resources on a world scale; (b) leadership in setting world-societal rules; and (c) mindsets which convince people that dominant world power rules in their interests. A second part of the paper reviews competing ideas about who or what exercises hegemony in world politics today, and out of this critical survey develops an alternative notion of ‘complex hegemony’. This conception of legitimated rule by dominant power involves an interplay of leading states, transnational elite networks, hyper-capitalism, and multiple legitimating discourses.