

Gramscian Hegemony in Greene's *the Power and the Glory*

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It includes the concept that the groups that establish their power not by dominating the people forcefully, but it takes or forms the consent of the people who are to be ruled.

Gramsci suggests that power cannot be achieved once and for all and that power is an ongoing process which operates even at those moments when a ruling class or group can no longer generate consent. In the process, society becomes saturated with attempts to police the boundary between the desires of the dominant and the demands of the subjugated. Raymond Williams, a British cultural theorist has pointed out that this was a huge advance on those critical positions that assumed that ideologies were simply false ideas imposed upon people. Gramsci's analysis, he writes:

"supposes the existence of something which is truly total . . . but which saturates society to such an extent, and which even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of [their] social experience . . . If ideology were merely some abstract, imposed set of notions, if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move easier to move and to change than in practice it has ever been or is."

(Williams, 1980: 37)

ABSTRACT

The concept of hegemony is a notion of power, domination and enforcing the rules. Hegemony, however, differs from a mere execution of power. Hegemony is also different from the conventional concept of domination. Domination involves the execution of power in order to enforce the law on the people, especially when the people oppose that domination. It doesn't involve the consent of the people who are being dominated. Domination is forceful. Hegemony is domination with consent. This paper discusses the concept of hegemony given by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and its investigation on the novel *The Power and the Glory* written by Graham Greene. This paper is divided into three parts: Introduction, Hegemony in *The Power and the Glory* and conclusion. Introduction discusses the concept of hegemony and also gives a brief synopsis of the novel. Second part of the paper: Hegemony in *The Power and the Glory* investigates the theory in the novel and the conclusion forms the last part of the paper.

Keywords: Power, hegemony, consent, domination

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci's philosophy was shaped by the ideologies of many prominent thinkers like Karl Marx and Niccolò Machiavelli. Gramsci was most famous for his theory of hegemony; an ideology that paved way to several other ideas. The theory of hegemony is far and widely accepted.

Antonio Gramsci recognized that social power is not simply a matter of domination on the one hand and subordination or resistance on the other. Rather than imposing their will, the 'dominant' groups (or, more precisely, dominant alliances, coalitions or blocs) generally govern with a good degree of consent from the people they rule, and the maintenance of that consent is dependent upon an unremitting repositioning of the relationship between rulers and ruled. A ruling power must be sufficiently flexible to respond to new circumstances and to the changing wishes of those it rules, in order to maintain its authority (Jones, 2007). For Gramsci, one of the key elements of a hegemonic strategy is the formation of links with the existing elements of culture. Rejection of an existing culture and imposing something new, points to a diversion between the culture of the people and their political representatives. When such diversions become unbridgeable they are expressed as a *crisis* (Jones, 2007: 7).

Hegemony – a definition

- Crudely, the power one social group wields over all the rest. However, hegemony is a more elusive and complex concept than this, involving not only the exercise of naked military and cultural power, but also the acceptance of this domination by the less powerful groups.



Gramsci added another dimension to the definition of hegemony: domination by consent. He believed that everyone, no matter what their occupation, their interests, or their education, is able to work out one's coherent ideas of how the world really works. Despite his description of hegemony as society's brainwashing, he had great faith in people's ability to go beyond the mere acceptance of the ideas they grew up with and become critical thinkers.

"The normal exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent."

(Gramsci, 1971: 215)

'War of Manoeuvre' and 'War of position' form an important part of Gramsci's hegemony. These indicate two phases in the struggle of class. 'War of Manoeuvre', according to Gramsci means that the subordinates are in direct conflict with the ruling party. On the other hand, 'War of Position' means that there is no open conflict, but a hidden one, where people do not directly go against the dominant groups and the forces seek to gain influence and power.

1.2. The Power and the Glory: Synopsis

The protagonist of the novel is a whisky priest who remains unnamed throughout the novel. The other main character: Lieutenant also remains unnamed. The story of the novel starts with the arrival of a Catholic priest in the town where the religion is outlawed. The setting in the beginning is of town of Tabasco situated in Mexico. In contrast to the "whisky priest" another man from the clergy is shown who is given the name of Padre Jose. He was also a priest but denounced his priesthood and got married in the fear of law. He lives as a state pensioner although he is regretful for the act he has done.

The lieutenant is cold and inhumane. He is given a task by the governor to catch the "whisky priest". In order to make his mission successful, he takes hostages from villages and those who gave him no information about the priest are shot dead. The lieutenant is shown so much against the church and religion and even the people following the religion because in his childhood he had a bad experience of the church and therefore there is a personal element in the search of the priest. The lieutenant has his personal thought that all members of the clergy are evil. He also believes that the church is corrupt.

In trying to escape from the lieutenant, the priest again meets the mestizo who persuades him to go with him to hear the confession of a man. The priest knows that it is plan of mestizo to make him get caught by the police and claim the reward of the money that was kept on the priest. But being a priest he feels unable to decline the request of a confession. He goes along with him and as expected gets caught by the police. He is given no chance of a trial and is given the punishment of being shot. In an introduction of the novel written by John Updike, he writes:

"One day I gave *The Power and the Glory* to... a native of Mexico who had lived through the worst persecutions... She confessed that your

descriptions were so vivid, that she found herself praying for him at the Mass. I understand how she felt. Last year, on a trip through Mexico, I found myself peering into mud huts, through village streets and through impassable mountain ranges, half- believing that I would glimpse a dim figure stumbling in the rain on his way to the border. There is no greater tribute possible for your creation of this character- he lives."

(*The Power and the Glory*, 2002)

Greene wrote, "I think *The Power and the Glory* is the only novel I have written to a thesis... I had always, even when I was a schoolboy, listened with impatience to the scandalous stories of tourists concerning the priests they had encountered in remote Latin villages, for I had been adequately taught in my Protestant history books what Catholics believed, I could distinguish, even then between the man and the office" (*Ways of Escape*, 1980). The cowardice of Padre Jose, the other priest in the novel is shown that he gets married fearing from the law. Greene writes in the novel, "the gift he had been given which nobody could take away. That was what made him worthy of damnation- the power he still had of turning the water into the flesh and blood of God." (*The Power and the Glory*, 2002)

The setting of the novel is Tabasco town of Mexico which is shown as full of material, physical, political as well as religious corruption. Within the conflict between the two poles i.e. politics and religion, both the lieutenant (presenting the political pole) and the priest (presenting the religious pole) see themselves as being endowed with a pure, perfect mission, but unfortunately, none of them has an absolutely pure mission. The priest feels proud that he is the only one in the state who is following religion despite of the strict law. But he is a drunkard, every now and then he is in need of alcohol. He had also been involved in sexual relations with a woman as a result of which he is the father of a girl. Having any sexual relation or marriage is a sin for a priest. Therefore, he is not a pure priest. The lieutenant is against the church and the religion. He frequently refers himself to be living for the people of his state but in order to catch the priest he takes hostages from many villages and shoots them. (revel.unice)

The only representatives of the church left in the town are: "whisky priest" and Padre Jose. Both of them lower the standards of the church. On one side, "whisky priest" has not left the religion but he is not a pure priest and on the other side, Jose has denounced religion and has got married. Both of them define the weakness and the corruption of the self. (revel.unice)

2. Hegemony in *The Power and the Glory*

Hegemony means domination of the subordinates by the dominant group, but with the consent of the dominated group. This consent can be generated directly as well as indirectly. Directly, it is, when the subordinate class works in accordance with the dominating group, whether influenced by their ideologies or by the effect of their own ideas. This consent becomes indirect when the ruling party applies armed forces to make the submissive group work according to them. This makes the chances of any revolt to go very low.

The first example of consent that is the essential part for establishing hegemony is seen on page no. 22 of the text in the first chapter of the text. It is as: A man said to his wife, "This is a small town," "And there is no use pretending. We have been abandoned here. We must get along as best as we can... If we don't like the church, well, we must leave it." Here, it is seen that the man has totally left himself in the hands of the ruling party. He accepts whatever the government has done to the people who of the state and however it rules. He also represents other people like him in the society who have accepted the rule of the government. He is directly giving consent to the ruling party. When people are not willing to raise their voice against the ruling party, their consent goes with the party who is governing them and therefore, they let it to govern their everyday life completely. By "active and direct consent", Gramsci writes, means, "the participation of all, even if it produces disintegration or an apparent tumult" (2007: 47). Therefore this man here is giving his direct consent to the ruling party by submitting to it. He is also making his wife to give her consent to the ruling group.

When the boy of this man talks to him about the religious book that his mother was reading to him, he gets annoyed saying that it is all false. His father says, "We have been deserted." Again he is accepting the rules of the government. He is conscious of the fact that their government is ruling them disregarding their wishes. The rules of the government and the employment of armed forces make the people of the state to stay calm and live their lives according to the ruling party. Thus, these people are bound to give the consent to the dominating party to direct their lives. With time, such consent is developed into the "common sense" that Gramsci understood as the ideas of the dominating groups developed as knowledge among the subalterns. (dukeupress.edu)

War of Manoeuvre is also very prominent in the novel. On his way to chase the "whisky priest" the lieutenant takes hostages from the villages who do not give any information about the priest. The lieutenant tries to convince the people of the village so that they tell him about priest. But none of them say anything regarding the whereabouts of the priest. He fails to win the consent of the village people in this way. He, therefore, decides to take hostage from the village and goes away with a boy of young age. At this the people of the village ask him to go away from the village at once so that no further trouble is brought upon them. Therefore, the strict step taken by the lieutenant makes the people to agree with the ideologies of the ruling party. In this way, the war of man oeuvre is established by the ruling party which makes the people to give their consent. "Gramsci concedes that leadership involves combining the level of force with that of consent" (Jones, 2007: 50).

The lieutenant in the novel represents the dominant group. In order to maintain his authoritative position, he is trying to make the people to change their mentality regarding religion, priests and God. This way he is trying to gain the consent of the people. 'War of Position' is seen prevalent here. Here is seen the conflict of ideas between the people and the ruling party. The lieutenant is shown as influencing the people with his own ideas, he says, "You're fools if you still believe what the priests tell you. All they want is your money. What has God ever done for you? Have you got enough to eat? Instead of food they talk to you about heaven. Oh, everything will be fine after you are dead, they say. I tell

you- everything will be fine when they are dead, and you must help."

An award of seven pesos is set on the priest i.e. whoever will help to get the priest caught will be awarded with this reward. A mestizo influenced with this, chases the priest wherever he goes so that he can get the reward. In the end, he gets the priest caught by the lieutenant. These are the tricks employed by the government to make the social group work according to it. In this way the social group gives its consent to the ruling party. These tricks change the ideas of the people and mould them towards the benefit of the dominating party. As Gramsci says before maintaining hegemony, the ruling party must seek the consent of the ruled mass and must do everything to maintain that consent. In the text, the government has adopted this way of giving reward to win the consent of the people to kill the priest.

Another example of the implication of maintaining authoritative position (War of Position) is seen on page number 192 where the priest and the lieutenant are having a conversation. Lieutenant says, "We'll give people food instead, teach them to read, give them books."

Priest says, "...can read the right books- the books you let them lead?"

Here, it is shown that the ruling party wants to control the mentality of the social mass by teaching them the books they want. In this way they create the ideologies they want to create among the people. The former creates those ideologies in the people which will prove beneficial for the ruling party; they teach the people what they want to teach. This is the first, easiest and most effective step in controlling the minds of the people. Giving people the education the ruling party wants builds the minds which are supportive to it and therefore it gets the consent of the people at every step.

Antonio Gramsci says, "hegemonic bloc dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to liquidate, or to subjugate perhaps even by armed forces" (Gramsci, 1971: 57). This means in order to maintain control, the ruling party can apply repressive forces, if needed. In order to maintain domination, sometimes it becomes necessary to apply armed forces. This involves direct conflict i.e. 'War of Manoeuvre' is seen into action. Two symbols in the beginning of the text show the presence of direct conflict like the broken church that has been converted into treasury and a man sitting with a gun.

A prominent example of direct clash in the novel is that all the people who used to practice religion, for example priests were shot dead without a trial or they were made to marry. Even those who helped them were killed.

The priest says, "I was expecting to see someone. The name was Lopez."

"Oh, they shot him weeks ago," Mr. Tench said. "They say he used to help... oh, undesirables... well, to go out" (p. 5).

In this context, Gramsci's saying becomes applicable, "hegemonic bloc dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to liquidate, or to subjugate perhaps even by armed forces" (1971: 57).

When the priest is caught as a smuggler, he is sent to prison where he meets a number of people. He meets a man who has been in jail because he had a crucifix. This man was in jail for such a mere fault which was considered a crime in that state where the religion was abolished. If the person had been forgiven, it would have become an example for others. Therefore, the ruling party will lose control over the society. So that its domination is not lost, the dominating party punishes for even a small crime. It gives no chance to anyone who can challenge the law.

When residing in a village the priest decides to say a mass in the morning, but he knows that it is against the law. He is warned by a man who said, "... You better be careful. You know, of course, that it's against the law." "A priest I knew was fined four hundred pesos. He couldn't pay and they sent him to prison for a week." This shows that the ruling party with its force and ideologies has influenced the people. This works in a way for the people that they develop the ideologies of the ruling party as their "common sense". When this "common sense" begins to fade away, then people are controlled with repression.

A symbol of vulture is used various times in the text as:

- "A few vultures looked down from the roof with shabby indifference" (p. 1).
- "A vulture hung there, an observer" (p. 3).
- "The vultures were bedded on the roofs, under the tent of their rough black wings" (p. 14).

These vultures symbolize that the agencies of the ruling party always keep an eye on the people of its state so that they don't go against law and never challenge the government. This suppresses any chance of revolt in the people.

Another symbol used in the climate is of hot weather/heat. This symbol is used to show the domination of the ruling party. It shows the effect of the state in the abolishment of religion. The hot weather is frequently linked with dying religion in the state.

- An example is seen when the priest asks Mr. Tench if he is a Catholic. He says, "No, no. Just an expression. I don't believe in anything like that." "It's too hot anyway."
- "The young men and women walked round and round the plaza in the hot electric night, the men one way, the girls another, never speaking to each other. In the northern sky the lightning flapped. It was like a religious ceremony which had lost all meaning." (p. 101)
- "The church stood in the darkness like a block of ice: it was melting away in the heat."

Heat, here, symbolizes the effect of the dominating party on the state. The church is shown as a block of ice which is melting in the heat i.e. religion is getting destroyed under the forces of the government.

The thought of lieutenant (ruling force) is shown in the novel as: "This was his own land, and he would have walled it in if he could with steel until he had eradicated from it everything which reminded him of how it had once appeared to a miserable child." Gramsci says, "A social group can, indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning

governmental power; it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well." The lieutenant has the full authority to hunt down the priest and take every step necessary to abolish religion from the state. He employs his leadership in the state and hunts the priest with his own plan which involved killing of some people. Therefore, subsequently he becomes dominative. "The other," lieutenant said, "is a priest." He raised his voice: "You know what that means- a traitor to the republic. Anyone who shelters him is a traitor too." To make people go against the priest, he tries to scare them with the threat of punishment. It is in his hands to decide the punishment for people. As when the priest is caught as a smuggler, lieutenant says, "Search him. If he has no money, put him in a cell. Give him some work..." (p. 118)

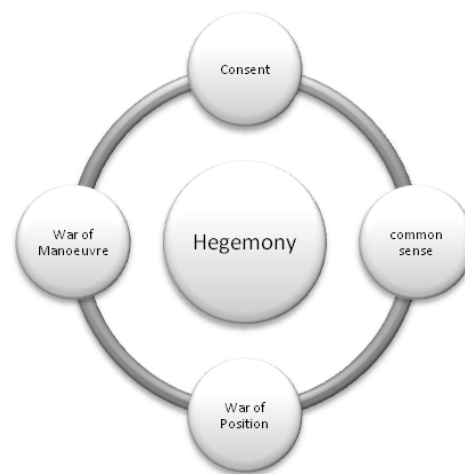
The elements of hegemony when studied in the reference to the text made it visual that the domination shown in the novel is a hegemonic domination.

3. CONCLUSION

Hegemony is the most important work of Antonio Gramsci. It is complex to understand and has various interpretations as Gramsci's thoughts written in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971) are complex. The translators give their own interpretations and understanding of his work though sometimes these interpretations contradict.

This paper has investigated various aspects of Gramsci's hegemony, like consent, "common sense", 'War of Position' and 'War of Manoeuvre'. All these elements are found prevalent in the novel *The Power and the Glory* (1940) written by Graham Greene. This novel deals with the laws of government in maintaining its authority over the people. It applies its laws to abolish religion in the state of Mexico. Understanding the novel with the perspective of hegemony, it is seen that the elements of hegemony are seen everywhere in the novel.

It can be said that the four elements of Gramscian hegemony are interlinked with each other.



War of Position, works to change the ideology of the subordinate class from the very beginning, in order for the dominant to maintain its authority. But if it fails to do so, repressive forces i.e. war of manoeuvre phase is there. Both of these phases work to change or create new ideologies among the social mass. These have a great deal of influence

on the people as they are able to change their minds according to the needs of the ruling party. Within a short period of time, these ideologies are established in the form of “common sense” among the people. This common sense makes the people to work in accordance with the dominating group, both consciously and unconsciously. Establishment of common sense gives no way to any revolt as the former generates the consent of the people and Gramsci says that consent of the suppressive group is the most important requirement for the establishment of hegemony. The interconnection of these factors makes hegemonic domination successful in a state.

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