

**A GRAMSCIAN APPROACH TOWARDS
AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

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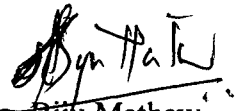
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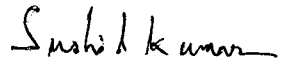
Certified that the dissertation entitled **A Gramscian Approach Towards an Understanding of the New World Order**, submitted by **Biju Mathew** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University, is my own work. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University.


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PREFACE

A world order should describe the distribution of power and authority among the political actors on the global stage. A given world order can be appraised from several standpoints. The dominant realist paradigm perceives an international order, wherein states pursue their national interests in a state of anarchy. The Transnationalists made efforts to understand the emergence of non-state actors in international politics. The neo-Kantian, idealist perspective foresees a world order that moves away from the state centric paradigm and that strengthens the global and local levels. And finally, the Marxist School, through a class analysis of the state, has emancipated a stateless and classless society.

The end of the Cold War and the 'liberation' of Kuwait gave way to George Bush's apocalyptic fantasy of a "new world order". The proclamation of this new world order means, if at all it means anything, the victory of liberal capitalism. The grand finale is over and the liberal values of democracy and free-marketism are the victors. And this is the third time in this century, the liberal West has told us the story of their heroic victory over forces of evil/menace. The two world wars and the end of the Cold War were, according to them, instances of their heroic victory.

The new world order, which was hailed as the victory of liberal capitalism, is made possible through the unbridled mobility of speculative capital and globalisation of production process. These two aspects of globalisation is made possible through

a revolutionary technological advancement. This, coupled with the information revolution and the great leap forward in global communication, has made the concept of “global village” a reality. But the fact remains that this is the maturation of capital, which took different forms. Thus, in this new age capitalism, globalisation can be understood as a restructuring of the global capital.

This multi-faceted phenomenon is better understood in neo-Marxian framework. The classical Marxist’s explanation of wage-labour is no more adequate to understand this phenomenon of information capitalism. Hence Marxism as a tool of analysis should be revised to come to terms with the present stage. But the Marxian method of analysis should remain the same for the basic contradictions of the capitalist system remain the same.

Gramsci, who is best described as one of the most original Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century, wrote within the Marxist framework. Gramsci, who outlived the fascist prison, tried to understand the dynamics of the Western capitalist societies. Gramsci, through his “philosophy of praxis”, tried to explain the coherence of the capitalist societies. And further, he delineated the politics for a revolutionary transformation of the society. It is argued that Gramsci is the theoretician of the superstructures – thus complementing the Marxian structure. Through a redefined conception of state and civil society and by involving coercion and consent, Gramsci argues that in the Western capitalist societies a frontal attack on the state structures will not be enough for a complete revolution. Further, the strategy of the working

class in these capitalist societies, should be one of a long sustained struggle of a war of position over the terrain of civil society. Towards a socialist transformation of the society, the dominant class should create a hegemonic bloc of alliances. For the creation of this historic bloc, the dominant class should have a consensual ideological plank. Thus the alliance of social forces has the potential for a socialist transformation.

This Gramscian understanding of the capitalist societies was adapted by Robert Cox. Cox employed the Gramscian concept of hegemony to explain the U.S. hegemony in the post-war period. Cox argued that an international historic bloc can be conceived under the supremacy of the United States. And these core nations try to expand their hegemony over the peripheral states through consent. For this, Cox conceives a global civil society. Thus, under the hegemonic order of the U.S., the capitalist mode of production which has a global reach carried the strength to bring about links among the social classes from all the countries which were a part of the hegemonic order. To sum up, Cox effectively used the Gramscian concept to have a better explanation of the U.S. hegemony and, in turn, the global capitalist order.

This study is an attempt to understand the Gramscian political thought and employ these concepts towards an understanding of the new world order. The introductory chapter outlines the broad theoretical framework. It briefly discusses the Gramscian framework/model and the nature of the new world order. Further, the theoretical link is also explained. The second chapter extensively analyses the

Gramscian political philosophy. It discusses the circumstances under which Gramsci matured into a political thinker and then discusses his political thought by explaining concepts like civil society, state, hegemony and the role of intellectuals and party in forging out a hegemony of the working class. The third chapter discusses, in detail, the nature and dynamics of the new world order. The discussion heavily relies on the Cox's understanding of Gramsci. Having elaborated the Gramscian model and its application in understanding the new world order, it goes without saying that, as with every other social theory, this model also have its own flaws. Thus the flaws and criticism are discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is a Marxist thinker deeply embedded in Italian traditions. While Gramsci was much concerned with the Italian conditions, his followers strove hard to extrapolate his theory beyond the Italian conditions. As such Gramsci's writings were marshalled to support the double-faced policy of the Italian Communist party — one pursuing an Italian road to Socialism, taking into consideration the Italian conditions and the other pledging an international outlook, pledging their support to the international communist movement.

In Italy, with the publication of Prison Notebooks in the immediate post-war, Gramsci's popularity was consciously built up by the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and after that there was a clamour from the liberals to the socialists to the entire spectrum of the left to appropriate Gramsci. Thus, Gramsci had been interpreted, claimed and disclaimed by many; an original Marxist thinker of orthodoxy, the libertarian Gramsci, the Leninist Gramsci, the social democratic Gramsci, the togliattian Gramsci and a strong idealist Gramsci who oppose idealism from an even more idealist stand point. Indeed his continent-wide recognition came in the 1970s in the context of a wave of happenings like the demise of an impoverished New Left, the increased skepticism about the wider applicability of Eastern road to Socialism and the apparent emergence of Euro-communism. Thus, during the 1970s, we have in the history of Marxist thought, a phase of "Gramscism." Impressive works began to

emerge on the internationalisation of state and civil society, the international aspects of social hegemony and supremacy, the viability of a transnational class and a bloc, the role of organic intellectuals and of international organization and other issues which help to define global politics in the twentieth century. A spate of debates to this effect was started with the Cagliari Conference of 1968.¹

The legacy of Gramsci was so outstanding that Eric Hobsbawm said, Gramsci is “probably the most original communist thinker produced in the 20th century West and a political theorist, perhaps the only major Marxist thinker who can be so described.”² Gramsci’s Marxism emerged out of his critique of the idealist currents in Italian philosophy as well as the crudely materialist, positivist, and mechanically economic interpretation of Marxism widespread in the international socialist movement. It was during his stay at the University of Turin, Gramsci came into serious contact with the intellectual world of his time—many of the professors had links with the socialist movement. Here Gramsci was introduced to the particular brand of Hegelianised “philosophy of praxis” to which he remained in an ambiguous critical relationship right to the end of his working life. Antonio Labriola, Giovanni Gentile, Mondolfo and Benedetto Croce were the idealist socialists of his time and Gramsci received the essence of Marxism through their eyes. Gramsci had been critical of all of them, but reasserts a substantial part of Labriola’s Marxism.

¹ It was at this conference, Norberto Bobbio presented a new dimension to the Gramscian concept of civil society.

² E.J. Hobsbawm, The Great Gramsci, New York Review of Books, Vol. XXI, No. 5, 4 April 1974.

Benedetto Croce was an important political figure who had cultural and philosophical influence on Gramsci. Croce, a professed Marxist for a short period, later defected proclaiming the death of theoretical Marxism. Gramsci was to describe himself self-critically as having been, in his youth, “tendentially Crocean” and many of his early writings have a distinct Crocean influence. But, later, much of Gramsci’s philosophical writing was devoted to a rigorous critique of Crocean philosophy in its relation to Marxism. Gramsci argued that the Crocean schema could not be an account of the actual concrete character of a history fundamentally determined by the class struggle. In his prison writings, Gramsci refers constantly to the need to combat Croceanism, both as a diffuse ideology and as specific philosophical system.

Gramsci is seen as a Marxist theoretician of superstructure and thus breaking the economic determinism of Marx and the authoritarianism of Lenin and to have insisted upon the role of human will and ideas. Gramsci was very much critical of the positivist economic analysis of Marxism by the Second International and wished to bring out the “genuine Marx”. By 1926, when he was drafting the *Lyons Thesis*,³ he explained the degeneration of Marxism during the Second International. For Gramsci, economism was not an abstract or academic problem, but was deeply embedded in the political practice of the Second International and viewed this as the root cause of the massive defeats by the German and Italian working class

³ The Theses presented by Gramsci and others and adopted by the Italian Communist party at a Congress held in January 1926 at *Lyons* in France.

movements in the decade following the First World War.

The economic analysis of Marxism has two facets: one is the one-to-one, unidirectional link between the base and the superstructure and the second, concerns with the nature of the superstructure and are being determined by the position of the subjects in the relations of production.

These two facets when combined forms the classic form of economism. This type of interpretation of Marxism had its epistemological foundation in a positivist conception of science, which viewed historical materialism in terms of a model of scientificity then prevalent in the physical sciences. The Second International endorsed absolutely this economism and argued in the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism, owing to its own contradictions. Further, as a corollary, they viewed that the socialist consciousness and the numerical growth of the proletariat class depended only on the exacerbation of economic contradictions within the capitalist system.

Gramsci rejected this positivist “stages of socialism” and also the exclusivist notion of economy devoid of political and cultural influence. He radically opposed this deterministic doctrine, often using the terms like ‘fatalistic’, ‘deterministic’ and ‘mechanistic’ without distinction. Gramsci says, “Marx has not written a catechism, he is not a Messiah who left a string of parable pregnant with categorical imperatives, indisputable absolute norms, beyond the categories of time and space. There is one categorical imperative, one law: “Workers of the world unite...” “Marx is not a

mystic, nor a positivist metaphysician: he is a historian, an interpreter of the records of the past; of all the records, not only one part of them.”⁴ Gramsci argued that objectivity could never be total, rather it was a condition of intersubjective agreement made within specific historical circumstances.

Gramsci was stressing the human consciousness, its subjective nature and argued that it cannot be captured prior or projected to the future, nor can it be examined by examining the mode of production. Thus Gramsci gave a humanistic face to Marxism by placing the human subject and its potential at the centre of transformation as diverted against the deterministic and linear view of classical Marxism.

The Prison Notebooks contain Gramsci’s most original ideas and that which are regarded as Gramsci’s most ambiguous political testament. As of most original thinkers, Gramsci also, had the problem of working towards radically new concepts in an old, value-loaded vocabulary. This, often deflecting task, was done by Gramsci within the archaic and inadequate apparatus of Croce or Machiavelli. The situation was compounded under an atrocious fascist censorship and we have a uniquely adverse process of composition. To avoid the prison censorship and the fascist state, Gramsci had to camouflage certain concepts and names: for instance, thus, “class” becomes “the fundamental social group”; “Marxism” and “Marx and Engels”

⁴ Quoted in Palmiro Togliatti, On Gramsci and Other Writings (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), p.151.

becomes the “philosophy of praxis” and “founders of philosophy of praxis” etc.

The conditions of Gramsci’s prison existence must be borne in mind when approaching his works. Hunch backed, sickly and having suffering three major setbacks to his health even before his arrest, his prison life was an eleven years death agony. Gramsci wrote, “prison is so finely wrought a file that it destroys thought utterly. It operates like the master craftsman who was given a fine trunk of seasoned olive wood with which to carve a statue of St. Peter; he carved away, a piece here, a piece there, shaped the wood roughly, modified it, corrected it—and ended up with a handle for a cobbler’s awl.”⁵ It is against this unique background one could place the success of the Prison Notebooks.

Gramsci started writing the Prison Notebooks from February 1929 and it went on till June 1935, when a severe ill-health prevented him from continuing his studies. But he managed to continue correspondence with his family till his death in April 1937. The Prison Notebooks contains thirty three hand written school exercise books, of which, four were translation exercises and the rest twenty nine came to be known as the Prison Notebooks. The letters from prison can also be seen as part of the prison writings—for they also, at times contains themes and methodologies. By any account, the Prison Notebooks are a vast enterprise, a panoramic sweep across Italian political and cultural history and a treasure of some of the least explored but

⁵ Antonio Gramsci. Selections from the Prison Notebooks (Madras: Orient Longman Ltd., 1996), pp.xcii-xciii.

potentially richest veins in Marxist theory. The four thousand page manuscript shows Gramsci's varied interest: from philosophy, economics, literary criticism and history to analysis of popular culture and politics. Even if one cannot pinpoint a 'final word' in any of these topics, the Prison Notebooks contain themes and subjects indicative of a consistent, intellectual project. Not only that, these ramblings are consistent with his pre-prison writings too—the nature of bourgeois rule in Italy and the project and direction of an alternative politics.

Gramsci was concerned with the development of a theoretical basis for a revolutionary strategy in the West, which takes into account the highlights of western culture as well as profound changes in the relation between state and civil society in the period of monopoly capitalism.

It is his unique analysis of social group or class, what characterises a class, hegemony as a strategy of ruling class and an alternative strategy for the working class that provides the clue to tackle the problem facing different societies today. While there is an implied political theory in Marx, he did not develop a comprehensive theory of politics, comparable to his economic analysis — for every social aspect is rooted in the material conditions of life and could be explained at the political economy level.

Gramsci went beyond Marx and Lenin in his analysis of the political and not just organizational nature of the party and its task in helping to construct elements of

a new society; as well as in the attention he paid to the relations between leaders, party and masses. In posing the viability of a new socialist order, Gramsci, relied heavily on the Marxist philosophy and delineated a new science of politics, the “philosophy of praxis”. The structure of such praxis is the dialectical unity of the objective and subjective elements of reality, of structural and superstructural activities.

Its major protagonists are the masses, the intellectuals and the party. The aim is to create a socialist hegemony and the philosophy of such praxis is Marxism, conceived by Gramsci as absolute historicism. Gramsci reformulated classical historical materialism, by linking theory and practice, to enable it to be seen as a mode of intervention in the course of historical political process. This new interpretation of historical materialism as a ‘science of history and politics’ forms the principal axis of Gramsci’s thought and that breaks away from the positivist traditions of classical Marxism.

Gramsci is viewed as the ‘theoretician of the superstructures’, who went well beyond the political economy framework of classical Marxism. This is attributed to the fact that, Gramsci felt, political economy had been developed substantially and what is needed is to theorize the establishment of political organization to contest the existing form of modern state. This elaboration on superstructure gets accomplished with the dialectical unity with the structure. The best gate way to Gramsci’s theoretical schema is his conception of civil society. Gramsci viewed civil society

apart from Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels placed civil society at the realm of economic relations—the decisive structural moment. Civil society in Gramsci does not belong to the structural moment, but to the superstructural moment. Gramsci writes: “What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural ‘levels’: one that can be called ‘civil society’, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’, and that of ‘political society’ or ‘the State’.”⁶

Thus Gramsci conceived the modern state as a combination of the private realm of civil society, which encompasses all the cultural-ideological relations, and the public realm of the political society or the state. Here Gramsci attempts to redefine the modern state in an expanded sense both as an agent of the bourgeoisie and as a site to promote wider public consensus. Gramsci argues that the basis of the coherence of the advanced capitalist societies is the primacy of the civil society (consent) over the political society (force). He views that in the advanced capitalist societies, the civil society is well developed that the state system need not be easy to be disrupted. The institutional development that characterised the modern bourgeois state under monopoly capitalism, both as state organizations and as complexes of associations in civil society, functions as “trenches” and permanent fortifications in a situation of crisis. Political parties, trade unions and other complex of associations were transformed from informal pressure groups outside the state to being coterminous with the exercise of power. This growing interaction between state and civil society results in the protection of state by the non-state sphere. Thus Gramsci’s

⁶ Gramsci, SPN, no.5, p.12.

thrust is at the realm of civil society, where the politics of consent is being operated rather than at the realm of coercion.

An integral concept of the state included both its formal apparatus (political society) and consensual control over the civil society and exercised both coercion and consent. It is in this integral sense, Gramsci argued, that the modern bourgeois state should be analyzed as consisting of the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but also manages to obtain the active consent of the governed. This balanced analysis of coercion and consent made possible a better understanding of class domination in a society. Gramsci recognized the political prowess of the bourgeoisie in seeking to generate a genuine political community. The bourgeoisie class poses itself as a dynamic organism capable of absorbing the entire society to its fold. Hence, in these capitalist societies there will be freedom of expression and liberal democracy functioning. Gramsci says that when the bourgeois society faces crisis, the political state began to exert force. And hence the society tends to move to a fascist system; where in, according to Gramsci, the system is very fragile because of the crisis in the civil society. An overthrow of the state institutions (political society) would still mean that there will exist elements of the old bourgeois order in the civil society. Thus Gramsci put forth the idea that in a capitalist society, where civil society is well coherent, there is little scope for a socialist transformation, unless a counter-hegemonic alliance force is developed under the leadership of the working class. Gramsci, on line with a classless society, argues that when socialist transformation

takes place, the political society is reabsorbed into the civil society. Thus Gramsci's scheme of civil society with political society/civil society without political society, is matched by society with class/society without class in classical Marxism. This moment of the withering away of the state (political society) is termed as 'regulated society' and it also entails the transformation of the economic structure and is dialectically connected to the transformation of civil society.

Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony as apart from the realist understanding of 'power over' or 'domination'. For Gramsci, hegemony comes in the form of "intellectual and moral leadership" exercised by the ruling class or the alliance forces over the terrain of civil society and has cultural, political and economic dimensions. For Gramsci, the moment of hegemony, operationalise over the interaction between the determinate objective conditions and the ripe subjective conditions of the hegemonic bloc. This hegemony which always has its basis on the decisive function exercised by the dominant group in the decisive nucleus of the economic activity, operates principally in civil society via the articulation of the interests of the fundamental class to those of its allies in order to form a collective will, a unified political subject.

Gramsci establishes a link between philosophy and politics through his history of philosophy, where he explains the conception of the world as always the function of the given hegemonic system expressed in the whole culture of a society. The political nature of this interpretation indicates the necessity for any class, which wants

to become hegemonic to struggle on the philosophical front in order to modify the common sense of the masses and realize an intellectual and moral reform.

In this attempt to create an active consent by the hegemonic class via accommodating the interests of the allied classes and thus forging out a genuine 'national-popular will'; Gramsci brings in the role of the intellectuals, the party and ideology. The intellectual and moral leadership of the hegemonic class over all allied classes goes far beyond the simple class alliances in pure instrumental term. According to Gramsci, hegemony involves a higher synthesis, so that the elements of the alliance forge in a 'collective will'. This collective will is formed through the creation of an ideological unity, which serves as a binding factor of the hegemonic bloc. In attempting to explain the nature of class domination in any society, Gramsci was concerned with the transformation of the class from the 'economic corporative' level to that of the hegemonic level; that of becoming the state in its integral form.

Here comes the role of the intellectuals and the party in bringing about a hegemonic bloc and subsequently, a hegemonic system and new order of a cultural unity. Gramsci's notion of intellectuals varied from the notion conceived that by the elite intelligentsia of the likes of Pareto, Mosca, Machiavelli, Michels etc.

For Gramsci, intellectuals were the functionaries of the superstructure and he argued that it was the functional role in the society that distinguished one kind of intellectual from the other, and not their intellectual tasks. To Gramsci, all are

intellectuals - for they exercise some degree of mental labour, but, there will be a social division of labour that sets apart certain individuals to function as intellectuals. Intellectuals were thus seen both as individuals with specific 'specialised skills' in the social division of labour and as functionaries of a wider process in society. This function consists in creating the condition most favourable to the expansion of its own class. According to Gramsci, intellectuals are agents of the dominant group that organizes consent in civil society as well as administering the legal, coercive functions of the state. Gramsci, then, viewed the role of the intellectuals as educators — that nurturing a collective consciousness and promoting it as a way of life of the entire society. Given this, Gramsci now distinguishes between the traditional and organic intellectuals. The organic intellectuals of the working class in forging out an expansive hegemony and the traditional intellectual of the old order trying to maintain the status quo. Thus, Gramsci's theory of intellectuals gives justification and explanation for the role of working class intellectuals/left wing intellectuals towards a socialist transformation.

Gramsci saw the intellectuals as a *via media* to disseminate the objectives of the party to the masses. Gramsci adopted the nature of the party from Machiavelli and remoulded it into one which suits the modern time. Gramsci viewed "The Prince" of Machiavelli as "The Modern Prince" and put forth the idea that the modern prince can but only be a collective consciousness, a collective man that comes from within the popular consciousness of the whole people.

Thus the modern prince can function as an organizer of a national-popular collective will and thus towards the realisation of a higher and total form of modern civilization. Gramsci recognizes the “primordial and irreducible” fact of the existence of the “rulers” and the “ruled”. Further he says that, once this is accepted, then the question of how one can fine tune this process comes into the fore i.e. how the process can become smooth with the least resistance from the ruled. Gramsci says that the decisive phase of a class to become hegemonic is the formation of a political party. It is the instrument by which subaltern groups assert their “integral autonomy” within a new societal order. The working class party is seen as the modern prince whose aim is to bring about a proletarian hegemony.

Gramsci viewed that the party and the masses are organically and dialectically linked. In the first phase the party is an elite, the anticipating experience and foretaste of a future totality. Its distinction from the masses is more explicit when the mass is amorphous, unorganized, and not conscious of its universal interests and aspirations. But as soon as the mass becomes politically conscious and attain political and cultural hegemony, the party loses its elite status. The party loses its character when the civil society is reconstructed around a new hegemonic order. Once the Gramscian concept of hegemony is viewed as the political, intellectual and moral leadership of working class over the whole of the society, a democratisation process is possible within the hegemonic system, thus providing us with a strategy of democratic transition to socialism.

Through the conceptual clarity of civil society and hegemony, Gramsci had successfully explained the nature and functioning of the capitalist societies. Now he addresses the question of socialist transformation through the concept of "War of position" and "Historical bloc". Gramsci describes the war of position as a siege warfare that requires exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness. As a political strategy it is markedly different from the vanguard strategy of capturing power - the war of manoeuvre. Gramsci takes into consideration, the political and cultural obstacles to revolution that distinguished Western capitalist societies with the East (Russia). Through his theory of hegemony, Gramsci had posited the possibility of attaining cultural and political hegemony by the working class before the capture of state power. This implies that even in a bourgeois society, there is the possibility of a counter hegemony by the proletariat.

Gramsci argues that war of position once won is a decisive moment. Since Gramsci visualises politics in a society as a struggle among different classes to become hegemonic through the formulation of a hegemonic bloc via the mediation of an ideology, the strategy of the proletariat should be of disintegrating the bourgeois bloc and subsequently building its own hegemonic bloc. This process of acquiring control over the terrain of civil society in a bourgeois society and thus forging out a national collective will towards the proletarian hegemony is termed by Gramsci as war of position — the best suited strategy in a bourgeois society. Thus war of position in politics is better understood as the struggle for hegemony within the anti-capitalist sectors of the society.

Gramsci's critique of economism gave a coherent theory of politics and a relative autonomy for the superstructure. Gramsci viewed an organic and dialectic link between the structure and superstructure and as a causal relationship he brought forth the conception of historical bloc. By this, hegemony in civil society could be integrated into Marxism without violating the primary role of relations of production. For Gramsci, the historical bloc is regarded as a mutually interdependent whole and recognises a necessary reciprocity between the two — the economic relation of production (structure) and the superstructural realm of state and civil society. According to Gramsci, the element of class is the link between the structure and the superstructure in so far as the superstructure contains the form of organization that guarantee the development of the structure in its present form. Gramsci uses this concept to explain the complex way in which classes and factions of classes are related in society and their complicated relationship between economic, political and cultural dimension of reality. In Gramsci, the concept of historical bloc replaces the metaphor of class analysis in classical Marxism. For Gramsci, construction of a historical bloc is a precondition for the exercise of hegemony by any class. The alliance forces of subaltern groups and classes rally around the dominant working class, thus asserting itself through the ideology of the dominant working class, over the terrain of civil society. Once this condition is fulfilled, the stage is set for the transformation or the control over the political society. Thus it is the ideology of the dominant class, which gives coherence to the historic bloc.

The New World Order

The last decade witnessed dramatic and drastic changes in the international political economy scenario. The collapse of the Berlin wall and of the Socialist bloc, the technological advancement, the information revolution and the great leap forward in global communication and transport has brought about drastic change at the global political economy level. And this was hailed as the victory of liberal capitalism. The globalisation of speculative finance capital and of a global production line has changed the nature of late capitalism. Supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation are playing a concerted lead role in managing and monitoring the international capital. This global scenario is christened as the embarkment of a 'new world order'. And, the ideological response came in the form of 'End of History',⁷ 'End of Ideology',⁸ 'Clash of Civilizations'⁹ etc.

The liberal world order is assessed by reference to widely shared values, such as peace, stability, human rights, degree of democratisation and environmental protection. This new world order is being shaped by an interplay among states, market forces, and transnational popular movements. The discourse of globalisation argues for seeing the world as a single space, although one with a complex and

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", The National Interest, Summer, 1989.

⁸ Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology – On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960).

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993.

diverse social system. Globalisation is changing the context in which states operate. The 'national project' remains sabotages and the states are at the moves of the transnational capital. On the other hand, Globalization creates pressure and avenues for the creation of new forms of governance.

The economic globalization is accompanied and accelerated by a process of cultural homogenization. The dominant cultural mode is disseminating through world media, and sustained by a convergence in modes of thought and practices among business and political elite. Yet this tendency is countered by the affirmation of distinct identities and distinct cultural tendencies. This tension of cultural origins has been reopened by Samuel Huntington with his claim that civilizations are the ultimate units of social life and that with the end of communism world politics will increasingly be dominated by conflict along the fault lines between civilization. The rapidity of information flow poses a threat to the attempt by the national states.

But the fact of the matter remains that there is nothing new in this emerging global scenario. Further, the argument that technology is leading the world is misleading - for it is not technology but political economy is in command. Instead, it is the maturation and change of course of the age old capital and its expansionist tendencies respectively. It is the same capital and its relations which took forms like mercantilism, industrial capitalism, neo-colonialism and of late imperialism. What remains is the continued and perpetual conflict between the institutions and relations of capital with that of the interests of the working class.

Classical Marxism-Leninism argued towards the link between the industrial capital and the finance capital. But of late, the functioning of the capitalist system takes a different turn altogether. The influx of the petro dollars into the international finance market, its recycling in the form of short term loans to the third world nations combined with the recession faced by the global economy since the late 1970s catalysed the imminent crisis of the international capitalist system to explode in the form of the international debt crisis. From this period onwards the international political economy saw the dominance of the highly mobile speculative capital.

This crisis in the capitalist windmill forced the system to go for adjustment mechanisms of the monetarist traditions in the third world nations. Thus the monetary approach to the balance of payments crisis of the third world nations were prescribed through the stabilization and structural adjustment programme. The programme envisages a deflationary macro-economic policy towards adjusting the deficits of the third world nations. Ever since the emergence of the international monetary regime, the deficit nations of the South are asked to adjust in order to finance the expenditure of the North. This can be said of the classical gold standard, the Bretton Woods system and the subsequent floating exchange rate mechanism.

The international capitalist system, thus forges out a consensus on issues like structural adjustment and stabilization programme. Along with this once could see the enunciation of the trade related theories portrayed in the neo-classical paradigm as

the only model of growth. It is well documented that the approach of trade leading to growth is ahistorical. Instead the proven path is that of growth leading to trade. Thus at the theoretical level itself, a broad consensus is forged out favouring the interest of the capital. It is argued that the neo-classical paradigm differentiates politics and economics into different spheres, thus serving the interest of the international capital. This consensual pattern could be seen at the political/ideological level too. The portrayal of the democratic liberal capitalist model of growth is a classic example. On the other side of the spectrum, one could see the collapse of the socialist system too, as an alternative model, moulded the features of the new world order. This global consensual pattern is termed as the new world order.

This consensus is manufactured at two levels: one at the level of the international capitalist class having its links with the third world bourgeois class and at another level, a broad consensus operating within the advanced capitalist societies irrespective of class differentiation.

Thus a consensual pattern favouring the international capital is attempted and is imposed on the global system at the political, economic, ideological and cultural level through the international institutions, as well as new inventions at the cultural level. This global model very well fit into the Gramscian method.

Cox (1983) positions himself away from the state-centered analysis and more towards the emancipating potentials of social forces. Cox argues that a particular

constellations of social forces emerge owing to the interconnectedness of three dimensions of power: that concerning the productive process, that concerning the relations between classes and that encompassing political power. This schema needs a reconceptualization of international political economy in Gramscian terms. Further Cox does not subscribe to a determinate view of a real world "out there". Hence the potential of a critical understanding of the order is in tact.

It is in this context of a consent over the civil society and use of force by the political society and thus having a coherent global order under the dominant capitalist class; that Gramsci's method of transformation towards a socialist order becomes important.



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CHAPTER II

GRAMSCIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: AN ANALYSIS

Born in 1891 in Sardinia, in Southern Italy, Gramsci had a bad childhood of ill-health, poverty and broken studies. His parents were of middle-class origin and hailed from one of the poorest and backward region of Italy. His father was a clerk with the local registrar before being imprisoned on charges of corruption. After this episode, his mother worked as a seamstress and tried to bring up her seven children. Hence, their family grew up in extremely difficult circumstances and deep financial insecurity. This situation of poverty forced Gramsci to discontinue his studies at the age of eleven and was forced to worked as an office boy in the local land registry. It was only three years later his parents were able to send him to a secondary school. From there he moved to Cagliari the capital of Sardinia, with his elder brother. To further complicate his problems were the childhood accident which made him hunch backed and physically underdeveloped, the internal disorders and the severe nervous complications that haunted him all his life. Thus “Gramsci came, that is to say, from a class whose destiny and political behaviour was to be a main preoccupation of his later political thinking – the rural, and especially the Southern, petty bourgeoisie.”¹

Gramsci was first introduced to socialist literature by his elder brother Gennaro who was working in Turin and who later became a socialist militant.

¹ James Joll, Gramsci (United Kingdom: Fontana/Collins, 1977). p.17.

Gennaro used to send socialist pamphlets back to Gramsci at home. Equally of formative influence was the Sardinian nationalist movement against the main landers during that period. And it was to this nationalist cause that Gramsci first adhered to. Even though the Turin experience made him identify with the working class struggle, he never lost the nationalist concern – the Italian South and the peculiar importance of the opposition between it and the North in Italian history, past and present.² Since 1887, the protectionist policies favouring the Northern industry, had produced an effective community of interests between big industrial capital and the reformist working class organizations. The impact of this on agricultural Italy was calamitous. Coupled with this economic factor was the poor regard the North had about the South that became the basis of the “Southern Question”.³

Gramsci stood for a unified Italy, that between the industrial North and the peasant South and argued that the Northern proletariat and the Southern peasant are the two formidable revolutionary forces that need attention. Hence, “one of Gramsci’s obsessive problems was the semicolonial relationship existing between Northern and Southern Italy, both in economic terms, with Northern industry treating the rustic South as a captive market and source of cheap labour, and in psychological

² Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.222.

³ An essay titled “Some Considerations on the Southern question”, which remained uncompleted at the time of Gramsci’s arrest.

terms, a contemptuous attitude which the workman shared with his employer is manufacturing centers like Turin, the town where Gramsci studied and practiced politics.”⁴ This question of peasant support and the relation between North and South of Italy became a central theme of his theoretical exposition later.

In 1911, Gramsci managed a scholarship to the University of Turin, thus came his first encounter with a modern industrial city. But the grant was miserably inadequate and that played havoc with the already weak health of Gramsci. Along with this was his increasing political commitment and thus Gramsci left his studies in the Spring of 1915. During his stay in the University, Gramsci was introduced to the intellectual world of his time and he had acquired an extensive knowledge of history and philosophy. He saw Marx through Labriola and was influenced by the idealism of Croce too. Gramsci’s experience as a student and the influence of this studentship on him must address the question of how much Marx he had read at this time. Gramsci attended a course of lectures on Marx in 1914-15 by Professor Annibale Pastore, who later recalled Gramsci as being “very restless, without knowing how or why he had to break away from the influence of Croce.”⁵ The work which had especially influenced him was the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (Karl Marx) and he often refers from this work; through which Gramsci got interested into the problem of the relations between the structure and superstructure, the

⁴ V.G. Kiernan, Imperialism And Its Contradictions (London: Routledge, 1995), p.176.

⁵ Joll, no.1, p.26.

historical movement of transition from one society into another and the system of cultural and moral values which characterised particular societies.⁶

In Turin, Gramsci not only had an exposure to a wide range of ideas and intellectual experience, but also came into contact with a militant socialist organization and with the day-to-day problems of the urban proletariat. This first hand experience of the proletariat upheavals and the general elections of 1913, which saw the peasant participation for the first time, made Gramsci a socialist.⁷ The 1913 election and the war turned Gramsci into a professional politician. By 1915 he began to write in socialist party publications and became a full time journalist. During the war years, Gramsci developed into a mature political commentator and wrote extensively on the social and political life of Turin and on International events too. His interest was varied and his audience went beyond the party rank and file. In 1916, Gramsci spoke in public for the first time, on French Revolution, on Paris Commune and on emancipation of women.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent revolutionary insurrection that broke out in Turin saw a turning point in Gramsci's political career. By this time, Gramsci was already one of the city's socialist leaders and he strongly opposed the attempt to compare the Russian Revolution with the French one. Gramsci wrote as early as April 1917, "The bourgeois press... has told us how the

⁶ Ibid., pp.26-27.

⁷ Ibid., p.27.

autocracy's power has been replaced by another power which is not yet clearly defined and which they hope is a bourgeois power. They have been quick to establish a parallel between the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution, and have found that the events are similar.... We, however, are convinced that the Russian Revolution is not simply an event but a proletarian act, and it must naturally debouch into a socialist regime.”⁸ And further, Gramsci hailed the advancement of Lenin's theory as a step against the determinism of the Bolsheviks and that of the Second International and wrote, “This is the revolution against Karl Marx's *Capital*.”⁹

Gramsci argued that the Bolsheviks had rejected Marx and the Marxist notion that the canons of historical materialism are rigid and immutable. He hailed the collective will of the Russian people in bringing out revolutionary transformation. Gramsci wrote in 1917, “It was socialist propaganda that forged the will of the Russian people. Why should they wait for the history of England to be repeated in Russia, for the bourgeoisie to arise, for the class struggle to begin, so that class consciousness may be formed and the final catastrophe of the capitalist world eventually hit them?”¹⁰ The impact of the Russian Revolution was perhaps more rapid in Turin than anywhere else in Europe. As soon as the news of February Revolution trickled in, the idea of “doing the same as in Russia” spread like wild fire

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks (Madras: Orient Longman Ltd., 1996), p.xxxi.

⁹ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), p.34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

and the attempt was to emulate the Soviet model in Turin. In the next three years, Gramsci became the theorist and propagandist of an attempt to emulate the Soviet model in Turin and this intervention has made him the centre of the struggle of the Italian working class in the post-war period.¹¹ As part of this struggle in April 1919, Gramsci, Tasca, Togliatti and Terracini took the decision to found a weekly *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order) towards a “review of socialist culture”. Gramsci wrote about the attempt as: “...the only sentiment that unified us, in our meeting of that period, was based on a vague enthusiasm for a vague proletarian culture; we wanted to act, to act, to act, we felt trapped, without perspective, amid the feverish life of those months following the armistice, when the cataclysm of Italian society seemed imminent.”¹²

In its existence of twenty months, *Ordine Nuovo* pioneered the theoretical debate of the working class politics of that time. *Ordine Nuovo* distinguished itself from the rest of the Left in different ways. The important aspect being the theoretical reflection of the practice of the Turin working class and further its adherence to the realisation of the Soviet model in Turin. Again *Ordine Nuovo* stood for broad based working class organization and saw the factory council as the embryos of the future socialist state. This position of Gramsci and *Ordine Nuovo* was severely criticized by the entire left and Gramsci was accused of a reformist agenda.

¹¹ Gramsci, no.8, p.xxxiv.

¹² Ibid., p.xxxvii.

The immediate post-war period saw a crisis in all fields of human activity in Italy. And this crisis, as expected by the Left, did not materialise towards a socialist transformation. Instead, it was the Left who are at the receiving end of the brunt of the people. Further, the Fascists with a new wave of promise rose to power by 1922 and once upon a socialist, Mussolini became the greatest persecutors of socialists and communists. However, the Two Red Years of 1919-20, were seen by many participants and observers as a golden chance for a successful socialist revolution.¹³ During this period, trade union movement got momentum and in the 1919 parliamentary elections, the socialist party also gained notable success. While a wave of strikes rocked the economic basis of the country, the landless labourers and peasants also began organizing politically demanding land reforms. This critically flux situation made the industrialists and the land owners to rally around Mussolini. It was in the autumn of 1920 that fascist squads began to carry out raids on behalf of the landowners against the socialists and the Catholic peasants. This period also saw the massive financial assistance by the industrialists to Mussolini's organization. Thus, as is the case with capitalism, the entire growth of fascism from the marginal phenomenon of 1919 to the mass phenomenon of 1920 was massively assisted by the State.¹⁴

It was in this background, Gramsci rose to the national and then international scene as a communist revolutionary. And the factory council movement made

¹³ James Joll, no.1, p.36.

¹⁴ Gramsci, no.8, p.xiv.

Gramsci a tougher politician and a more skilled employer of Marxist dialectic. Workers' councils came into being during the big strikes in Turin in 1919-20 period, partly because of spontaneity and partly because of *Ordine Nuovo* propaganda. By the autumn of 1919, the Council movement had spread to many factories in Turin and elsewhere in Piedmont. Gramsci saw the factory council as the nucleus of a revolutionary movement and of a future proletarian state: "The Factory Council is the model of the proletarian state. All the problems which are inherent in the organization of the proletarian state are inherent in the organization of the Councils."¹⁵ Gramsci held the view that the Councils are a completely new form of organization, whose function should not be confused with that of the trade unions or the socialist party. The nature and functioning of the councils can be summed up as follows: "The councils were the proper means of enabling all the workers of a factory, regardless of party allegiance, religion, etc., to shoulder the task of organizing production; they were the germ of the future worker's state, the main organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They should be elected by all the wage-earners of a given plant without exception, so as to take over the functions of capitalists in the factories, and, in due course, the organization of the State."¹⁶

Gramsci thought that the workers' Council were the Italian counterpart of the Russian experience and strongly felt that the experiment will transfer the power to the workers. Gramsci viewed the Council movement as a long-term revolutionary

¹⁵ Joll, no. 1, p.38.

¹⁶ Kokkowski, no.2, p.224.

instrument, a means of educating the masses, of uniting the workers and creating the cohesion and confidence which would enable the workers to capture power. But things were not smooth for Gramsci and the workers. Gramsci and his friends stood isolated within the socialist party, in Turin and worse within the *Ordine Nuovo* group too.

In the Spring of 1920, the workers and the industrialists came to a direct confrontation in Turin and the industrialists refused to recognize the factory council. The workers responded through a massive strike and the counter response was lock-out and repression by the industry-government alliance. This insurrection died down in Turin itself and Gramsci lamented the indifferent role played by the Milan workers. This defeated in Turin was followed by renewed industrial unrest in many parts of Italy by September. This unrest resulted in the occupation of factories in Milan and it spread throughout Italy. The workers responded to the threat of lock-out through the occupation of the factories. The unions encouraged this tactics as a defensive one and this assumed a scale which was unexpected. And in many places production continued and at possible places, the workers armed the factories. Although the movement was of large scale and unprecedented the balance was weighted heavily against the workers. The problem faced by the workers were many. From the very outset, the trade unions were for a compromise settlement. To make matters worse, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) refused to spearhead the insurrection to a culmination. All were eager to put the onus of leading the movement on the Turin working class. But the Turin workers, experienced with the April episode, were too apprehensive of

a lead role. In the context of this abstentionist tendencies of the working class, the liberal state took the policy of wait and watch, and finally the movement fizzled out on its own. A compromise formula was reached between the state and the workers, even though many of the workers were not satisfied by the compromise. The compromise was the last success of the liberal regime in Italy and it successfully reintegrated the organized labour movement into the state structure.¹⁷ Even though Gramsci envisaged a remarkable phase in the socialist transformation, through the factory council movement, the entire Left, the anti-parliamentary Left, the Centre and the Right strongly opposed the empowerment of the workers' council. They argued that the workers should be in the factory and not in parliament or in party headquarters.¹⁸ From Gramsci's point of view, the defeat of the factory council was disastrous. Instead of the culmination of the movement into a revolutionary wave, it ended in the reinforcement of the reformist agenda. But the experience contributed to the general thinking of Gramsci – for it forced him to analyze the fallacies of the movement.

The failure of the factory council movement made Gramsci as well as Bordiga to denounce the entire socialist past of Italy and blamed the centrist leadership for the failure. Even though Gramsci was almost alone in his defense of the factory council, many were in conformity with him for the creation of a Communist party in the Leninist sense. This anti-parliamentary faction came out with a separate manifesto in

¹⁷ Joll., no.1, p.44.

¹⁸ Kolakowski, no.2, pp.224-25.

October 1920 and was endorsed by Gramsci, Bordiga, Terracini and others. The supremacy of Bordiga's line of action was very much evident in the document – for the emphasis was on discipline, centralism and purity of principles and not on mass based politics, as advocated by Gramsci. At the Livorno Congress of the Socialist party in January 1921, the split was effected and one-third of the delegates formed a new central committee under the leadership of Bordiga – thus forming the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

When the Communist party was formed under Bordiga, Gramsci had only four years of serious political activity to back him and it took another three years for Gramsci to muster political confidence and carve out a separate political position against an overwhelming Bordiga.¹⁹ This following three years saw great political uncertainty like the consolidation of fascism in Italy, the reflux of revolution internationally, the beginning of the power struggle within the Russian party, and a growing rift between the Italian Communist Party and the Third International. Gramsci's political activity during this period could be placed within the context of three main, interrelated determinants; international developments and the united front; Italian developments and fascism; the struggle against Bordiga and Tasca within the party.²⁰

¹⁹ Gramsci. no.8., p.xlvi.

²⁰ Ibid., p.xlvii.

The Second Congress of the Italian Communist Party, held on March 1922, in Rome, rejected the Comintern proposal of a united front against fascism. The basic difference was over the question of aligning with the Italian Socialist party. The rift between the PCI and the Comintern and that within the PCI – on the question of fighting fascism – can be well captured by the debates at the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern, held in November 1922, in Moscow.²¹ The Comintern, even though, stressed the petit-bourgeois and the big bourgeoisie component of fascism, dismissed fascism as a transitory phenomenon and attacked the social-democrats – defining them as the left wing of bourgeoisie. Further the Comintern proclaimed a united front strategy against fascism. The Italian Communist party reacted differently to this proposal. The Right of the PCI (Tasca and others) endorsed this line, while the Left of the PCI (Bordiga and others) severely criticized this line of thought. Bordiga argued that there is no difference between fascism and capitalism and that fascism operates within the bourgeois politics or ideology. Gramsci was not free from the influence of Bordiga. But he stressed, though with continuing uncertainty, the petit-bourgeois origin of fascism; the predominant component of finance capital; and its success in uniting to a class despite its internal contradictions. Gramsci argued that the differences within the PCI should be sorted out at that level only. But the Comintern imposed its will on the delegates through an ultimatum given by Lenin and others.

²¹ Gramsci, no.8, pp.1-1111.

In the meanwhile, fascism began to expand and Mussolini engaged into a pacification pact with the Italian Socialist party. The fascist takeover of October 1922 was predictable in the wake of severe oppression of the opposition. The main targets were the communists and an infant party was completely shattered under severe oppression of all kinds. Even under these hardships and tough times, the party functioned with its much less infrastructure. But the fact remains that under Bordiga's leadership the party had suffered heavily – for not understanding the significance of fascism at the appropriate juncture. In November 1924, Gramsci had moved from Moscow to Vienna to take charge of a newly founded Comintern bureau of anti-fascist action. By this time, Gramsci had drifted away from Bordiga and was trying to carve out a leadership of his own in the Communist party. In this attempt Gramsci tried to revive the old *Ordine Nuovo* thematic and argued for a mass based party of workers and peasants. In this respect he proposed the slogan of a “federal republic of workers and peasants” as an intermediate “ideological preparation” for a Soviet regime and this concern represented something quite new in the Italian party at that time.²²

In the wake of severe repression by the fascists and of the uncertainty within the PCI, the Comintern installed a “mixed” leadership accommodating the majority from left and a minority from right. There was opposition from all quarters. The centre of the PCI equated social democracy as “the left wing of fascism” and defined it as the armed dictatorship of a fraction of the capitalist bourgeoisie and big land

²² Gramsci, no.8, p.lxi.

owners.”²³ The entire situation of the PCI was referred to the Fifth World Congress and by this time, the centre was in a commanding position within the party. But the decisive factor in the change of leadership between 1923 and 1924 was undoubtedly international – particularly, the role played by the Comintern and the way in which the relationship between the national and international dimensions of revolution was convinced.²⁴ As mentioned earlier, numerous arrests deprived the Communist party of its leadership and on his return, Gramsci was recognized as the leader of the party by the Comintern. The two years that Gramsci led the PCI (1924-1926) was the closing of an epoch which started with the October Revolution and which each national communist parties thought of an imminent revolution. During this period, the fascist repression was heavy and amidst this situation, Gramsci was trying to revive the party and at the same time trying to theorize the fascist phenomenon. On both the counts, he could not move forward much. The Communist party was banned soon and on the nature of fascism; Gramsci was not able to concretize it into a theory.

Fascism in Italy made its first appearance early in 1919, when Mussolini founded the fascist movement, based on some of the elements of his campaign for Italian intervention in the war. The initial support came from the wounded nationalistic feeling of the ex-servicemen and from the chaotic post-war scenario. These elements of extreme nationalism combined with a vague appeal for a new economic and social system, coupled with a widespread threat of revolution gave

²³ Ibid., p.lxv.

²⁴ Gramsci, no.8, p.lxvi.

fascism a popular face. Mussolini and others successfully capitalized on this situation and along with this employed massive repression against the opposition. Thus a highly repressive fascist order was in place.

Gramsci always analysed fascism by its social base and felt that the structure of its support needed a sophisticated analysis for it to conform both to the observable facts and to Marxist theory.²⁵ Gramsci characterized the support base fascism as basically petty bourgeois and big bourgeoisie. Gramsci wrote, "What is Italian fascism? It is the insurrection of the lowest stratum of the Italian bourgeoisie, the stratum of the layabouts [*fanmulloni*], of the ignorant, of the adventures to whom the war gave the illusion of being good for something and of necessarily counting for something, who have been carried forward by the state of political and moral decadence...."²⁶ Gramsci argued that the petty bourgeoisie are the rootless and destructive, and functions as a natural instrument for the counter-revolutionary intentions of the industrialists and landowners who make up the old ruling class. Further Gramsci argued that, "Fascism had given back to the bourgeoisie a class consciousness and class organizations...."²⁷

Gramsci, even though, saw capitalism and fascism as equivalent in the early stages of the fascist phenomenon, later recognized the unique nature of the

²⁵ Joll, no.2, p.55.

²⁶ Ibid., p.57.

²⁷ Gramsci, no8, p.xxviii.

phenomenon. As against the dominant view in the PCI, that there is no intermediate between fascism and proletarian revolution, Gramsci viewed of a social-democratic alternative of a short-lived one. Further, Gramsci argued that this short period will lead to civil war and urged for coordinating the political will of the proletariat. Eventhough Gramsci was not in a position to come to terms with the fascist phenomenon, he was optimistic of its collapse and the installation of a proletarian state. Gramsci said in a speech in Moscow, "After the period of Fascist rule, we shall enter the period of decisive struggle for the proletariat, for the conquest of power. This period will arrive at more or less distant time. It is difficult to say, to prophesy how the situation in Italy will develop. But we can assert that the decomposition of fascism will mark the beginning of the decisive struggle for the conquest of power."²⁸

The two major document which proclaimed Gramsci's position during 1925-26 was the *Lyons* Theses and the uncompleted essay, 'Some considerations on the Southern Question.'²⁹ *Lyons* Theses was adopted by the Third Congress of the PCI held in *Lyons* in France in January 1926. The *Lyons* Congress took place under a wave of factionalism and accusation of 'bolshevization' in the party. Gramsci stressed the Comintern line of thinking saying that bolshevization is a necessary stabilization of the Leninist version and argued that it is necessary towards the creation of a Communist party of international stature. The *Lyons* Theses by Gramsci and others repudiated all the past socialist movement in Italy (prior to the

²⁸ Joll, no. 1, p.61.

²⁹ Ibid., p.66.

formation of the Communist party) and stressed the qualitative novelty introduced by October Revolution and Leninism. The theses went on to affirm, among other things, the inevitability of revolution and stressed the need for forging an alliance between the northern working class and the southern peasantry. This innovation in alliance politics, outlined by Gramsci, came in the wake, a stable fascist regime. 'The strategy was to seek an insurrection among the peasantry and thereby moving towards a transformation. So the task is outlined as, "organize the workers of the North and the Southern peasants and forge their revolutionary alliance."³⁰

And accordingly, during the last years, the PCI focussed on factory committees and started working among the peasants too. Gramsci's innovation with regard to the workers-peasant alliance brought him up against the problems which were to occupy him for the rest of his life: the role of intellectuals in society, the nature of historical tradition and historical change, and the way in which the hegemony of a ruling group is exercised over the masses.³¹

On 8th November 1926, Gramsci was arrested by Mussolini's police on his way to parliament. The trial, which began only on 28th May 1928, was a political showpiece under fascism. A special tribunal was formed to trial twenty comrades on charges of insurrection. The public prosecutor pointing to Gramsci declared, "for

³⁰ Gramsci, no.8, p.lxxx.

³¹ Joll, no.1, p.71.

twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning.”³² But exactly the opposite had happened. As against all odds, Gramsci read voraciously and wrote and scribbled the original ideas that poured out of his brain. The prison life really played havoc with his health. As the news of his deteriorating health spread, there was an international campaign to release him, notably by Pierro Sraffa. In 1933, Gramsci was transferred to a clinic due to an urgent necessary and in 1935, to a proper clinic. But this was too late and the situation became worse, and on April 27, 1937, Gramsci died. Thus Gramsci lead the life of a true revolutionary throughout his life and this genuine commitment towards a revolutionary movement gave him the strength not to fall into the trap of privileges offered by the administration. Thus, we had one of the most original Marxist thinkers of the 20th century, leaving behind a classic work.

Ever since Aristotle’s *Politics*, the idea of **Civil Society** has passed through the hands of virtually every significant western political philosopher. Despite this long history, the concept of civil society has retained at least four key elements.³³ First, its long drawn association with the state, second, its role in defining specifically a modern type of society, third, the consolidation of its identification with modernity and finally, civil society as the site of modern political agency.

³² Gramsci, no.8, p.lxxxix.

³³ Alejandro Colas, “The Promises of International Civil Society”, *Global Society*, Vol.II, No.3, 1997, pp.262-267.

The concept of civil society was given a specific definition, content, rigour and clarity by the classical political economists. This conception is done through a demarcation of politics and economics into separate domain of activities. Ellen Meiksens Wood defines this conception as:

“a conception which appeared systematically for the first time in the eighteenth century – is something quite distinct from earlier notions of ‘society’: civil society represents a separate sphere of human relations and activity, differentiated from the state but neither public nor private or perhaps both at once, embodying not only a whole range of social interactions apart from the private sphere of household and the public sphere of the state, but more specifically a network of distinctively economic relations, the sphere of the market-place, the arena of production, distribution and exchange.”³⁴

The classical political economists stood for an individual space within a framework of public space and argued for an autonomy to this individual sphere. Moreover, this sphere was given the primacy over the state activities. The classical political economists felt that the society is a self-regulating mechanism constituted by rational, motivated subjects and argued for the complete freedom of civil society. Thus, the school of classical political economy made a distinct contribution to political theory by relocating the political discourse from the state to the realm of civil society and, thus, contributing further to the liberal state/society dichotomy. By limiting the functions of the state and by proclaiming the primacy of civil society, the classical political economists did not figure out the possibility of – a Hobbesian `state of

³⁴ Quoted in Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society: Explorations in Political Theory* (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), p.114.

nature'- thus destroying civil society itself. It was left to Hegel and Marx to demystify the nature of civil society propounded by the classical political economists.

Hegel is regarded as the first theorist who distinguished the state from civil society – the distinction between the private domain and the public domain of political state. Hegel was considerably influenced by the classical political economists and like them, saw civil society as essentially an achievement of the modern world. Civil society is seen as the progressive, enlightening and emancipatory domain wherein individuals can realize their potential. Hegel's contribution to the concept was distinctive in three ways from the earlier notions.³⁵

Firstly, Hegel expanded the notion of civil society and rescued it from being excessively identified with the economy and saw it as a set of social practices, which are constituted by the logic of capitalist expansion and distinct from the economy. Hegel considered civil society as one of the moments of ethical life, which regulate the life of the individual, the other two being the state and family. And civil society is seen as an important stage in the transition from the family to the state, because it is the domain where the two principles of modern society – particularity and universality – are negotiated. Secondly, Hegel recognizes a significant tension between the individualist ethos of civil society and the reproduction of the community as an ethical entity. Hegel views civil society as the domain of particularity where the self – seeking individuals are concerned with the fulfillment of their needs. Hegel

³⁵ Ibid., pp.117-121.

feels that self-centered, rational human beings pursuing their individual goals will only destroys the ethical life. Hegel finds ethical life in a society where the members share certain ideals and where they are united by a morality, which prescribes their roles. Hegel also believed that civil society has to be organized pedagogically and institutionally – for if left alone, society will deteriorate and disintegrate. Hegel argued that particularity should be mediated by universality and, hence, viewed civil society as the entity where the particular and the universal interests of an ethical community is reconciled. Thus, Hegel made independent associations and public opinion the core components of civil society, grant them as political and ethical mediators between individuals and the state and acknowledged the centrality of conscious reflexive individuals in the construction of modern civil society.³⁶

Marx inherited the Hegelian perspective on civil society, but he went beyond that and analysed the system itself. Marx inherited the Hegelian view that civil society characterises egoism, self-interest and conflict between men and that need to be transcended. But, as against Hegel who saw the transcendence at the level of civil society itself. Marx argued that civil society is the domain where the exploitation takes place – the domain of the appropriation of surplus labour. Marx felt that an agency should emerge from within the civil society to transcend the self-centered nature of human beings.

³⁶ A. Colas, no.33, pp.264-65.

Marx's analysis of civil society unfolded in two stages.³⁷ The first, at the level of the critique of the Hegelian system of philosophy and secondly, through the use of the method of political economy to inquire into civil society itself. Marx reversed the primacy given by Hegel to state and made civil society the theatre of history. For Marx and Engels, the state is the subordinate element and civil society, the realm of economic relations, becomes the decisive element. Marx writes in the *Critique of Political Economy*, that "the anatomy of civil society is to be sought on the political economy," and, "the term of intercourse determined by the existing productive forces at all previous historical stages, and in its turn determining these, is civil society.... Already here we see how this civil society is the true source and theatre of all history, and how absurd is the conception of history held hitherto which neglects the real relationships and confines itself to high-sounding dramas of princes and states.... Civil Society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, in so far, transcend the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality and inwardly must organize itself as State."³⁸

Thus, Marx, while claiming the primacy of civil society over the State, has refuted the Hegelian claim of a universal state. Now if the individual is debarred from

³⁷N. Chandhoke, no.34, pp.135-142.

³⁸ Quoted in Norberto Bobbio, "The Conception of Civil Society in Gramsci" in Chantal Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), pp.29-30.

participating in the state, then he is forced to live in the civil sphere. Marx argues that this possibility is also ruled out in a bourgeois society. Through the commodification of labour and further, through the alienation of labour from the means of production, individuals become valueless in a bourgeois society. This, coupled with the dynamic social relations of production in a bourgeois society makes the individuals individualistic and egoistic and hence the natural bonds of community is replaced by atomized subjects.

Thus Marx demystifies state and civil society and inquires into ways of transcending civil society. Marxian critique of civil society is an indictment of a society which has excluded the workers from the domain of civil society. For Hegel and the liberals, the poor are the non-members of the civil society, since their lack of property deprives them of the benefits of this sphere. For Marx, it is an advantage – for only the members of civil society experience the disadvantage of the system which is dominated by private interests. With the insertion of the poor into a discourse on civil society, Marx locates contradiction in society at a different point. Thus, the contradiction shifts from that between the propertied classes, to that between the propertied and the non-propertied classes. Civil society is the terrain of the reproduction of dominant relationships, but it can equally be the site where the underprivileged classes can fight for social and economic emancipation. Thus Marx acknowledges the emancipatory power of the working class in transcending the contradictions pertaining to the liberal notion of civil society. The classical political economists had brought civil society into the mainstream of social theory. Hegel

went beyond, but held civil society hostage to his idealized state. Marx, through an inversion of Hegel, restored civil society as the theatre of history and it was only Marx who transcends the liberal notion of civil society through an emancipatory project of the working class.

Between Marx and Gramsci stretches a long period in history and capitalism had entered the monopoly and imperialist phase. Fordist regimes of accumulation saw the production streamlined and the workers controlled. And at the Second International, Marxism was given a worst reductionist, mechanical and economistic interpretation. The maturation of Gramsci's political thought should be seen in the context of the problems within the Russian communist party, the defeat of the working class and the rise of fascist forces in Italy, and of the intellectual defeat of an economistic interpretation of Marxism. Gramsci's political theory expands through an analysis of the civil and political society and flows through the concept of hegemony and the role of intellectuals.

While Hegel and Marx identify civil society with the economic structure, Gramsci introduces a profound innovation and places the realm of civil society at the superstructural level. One of the famous extracts from the Prison Notebooks says: "What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private', and that of 'political society' or 'the state'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises

throughout the society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government."³⁹

In one is to paraphrase Marx with this, it would be tempting to say that for Gramsci civil society includes not 'the whole of material relationships', but the whole of ideological-cultural relations; not 'the whole of commercial and industrial life', but the whole of spiritual and intellectual life.⁴⁰ Further, if one goes by Marx and view civil society as 'the real home, the theatre of all history', one is tempted to view that this shift in meaning in civil society would mean that Gramsci had place the theatre history elsewhere. Further, Marx and Gramsci saw the civil society as the positive and active moment of historical development as against the state in Hegel.

Gramsci derives his concept of civil society from Hegel and interprets it as the political and cultural hegemony of a social group on the whole of the society. Gramsci argues that state cannot be understood without an understanding of civil society and suggests that it is in civil society that the state finds acceptance for its policies and programmes. To Gramsci, the relationship between state and civil society denoted to a particular type of relation that was prevalent in western capitalist countries. Gramsci viewed that transformation in the European societies since the late 19th century had led to increased effort by the bourgeoisie to adapt the plurality of organizations in civil society to the needs of the economy. In the same manner, a

³⁹ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.

⁴⁰ N. Bobbio, no.38, pp.30-31.

fundamental feature of the modern bourgeois state is to bring to its fold previously autonomous institutions to its rule. This institutional development that characterised the Western European states under monopoly capitalism, both as state organizations and as complex associations in civil society, functions as “trenches” and permanent fortifications during crisis moments. Hence, Gramsci argues that in these bourgeois societies, it is not easy to capture state power. This growing interaction between state and civil society since then had resulted in the protection of the state by the non-state sphere. Here it is not the individual but the state which is shielded by the civil society. Thus, as in Marx’s formulation, in Gramsci’s schema also the individual is not protected neither by the state, nor by the civil society and, hence, both should be transformed.⁴¹

The two major innovations Gramsci introduced into the classical base-superstructure relations are: the primacy of superstructure over the structure and within the superstructural sphere, the primacy of civil society over the political society or the state.⁴² Gramsci argues that, “it is not the economic structure which directly determines the political action, but it is the interpretation of it and of the so-called laws which rule its development.”⁴³ Hence rejecting the classical one-to-one relation between the base and superstructure, Gramsci stood for a less rigid relation and placed the interpretative capacity or the subjective will of human beings at the

⁴¹ N. Chandhoke, no.34, p.151.

⁴² N. Bobbio, no.38, pp.33-36.

⁴³ James Martin, Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 1998), p.21.

centre of political activity. By this less rigid model, one could comprehend the societies in which civil society mediates the political power of the ruling class. This gives a role for the civil society in the reproduction of the dominance of a class. Gramsci talks of the possibility of transformation when the active subject identifies the suitable objective conditions through a collective will of the masses. Further, when this objective conditions are identified by the collective will, these objective conditions are no more the dictating aspect, instead, they become an instrument for a desired end. Hence the active subject of history, who operates within the superstructural level, uses the structure itself as an instrument towards transformation. Therefore, the structure is no more the subordinating moment, but it becomes the subordinate moment of history.

Another major innovation Gramsci introduces is the interaction between state and civil society. Gramsci viewed the primacy of civil society over the political society or the state. Thus, in Gramsci, these relative autonomous spheres were brought together through an expanded notion of state. Gramsci distinguishes between the societies of East (Russia) and West in his famous passage: "In Russia the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earth works...."⁴⁴ Gramsci argued that, as against the situation in Russia, in the advanced capitalist

⁴⁴ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.238.

societies, the civil society is sturdy and robust enough to protect the state system at the time of a crisis. Thus, the political society or the state is not that easy to be disrupted at the moment of an economic crisis. He suggests that in capitalist societies power is diffused at various sites and takes various forms. The distinction between political society and civil society is also a distinction between the sites and forms of power. Political society is the location of the institutionalized use of coercion – through prison, judicial system, the armed forces, the police, etc. – and civil society is the location where the state operates to enforce invisible, intangible and subtle forms of power, through educational, cultural and religious systems and other institutions.⁴⁵ Thus the political society employs brute force and the civil society creates spontaneous consent towards the sustenance of an order. And between coercion and consent, Gramsci prefers the latter – for it is the sphere that functions to reproduce the system.

Hence the basic proposition of Gramsci is that, it is at the realm of civil society, that the ruling class maintains and reproduce the system – through an ideological and cultural hegemony over the entire society. He argues that the modern state functions as a balance between these two variables and the extended version of the state, “the integral state”, becomes the civil society itself at the moment of hegemony. Gramsci feels that all states are coercive power structures, but states without civil societies are weak and transparent and can be won over by a war of movement. Whereas modern capitalist states, which have the backing of the civil

⁴⁵ N. Chandhoke, no.34, p.149.

societies does not employ force at every pretext. But even in these societies, force is an option as a last resort to restore order. Gramsci argues that this attempt of use of force shows the crisis of the civil society. Thus Gramsci's stress was at the realm of the civil society where the politics of consent is operating. He was interested in identifying the struggle for power/control over the terrain of state as well as civil society, but more so, at the realm of civil society. Hence an expanded notion of state is viewed both as an agent of the bourgeoisie and as a site to promote wider public interest. Thus an integral concept of state employs both coercion and consent. Gramsci argues that it is in this integral sense, that state system should be analysed. And this integral state consists of the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but also manages to obtain the active consent of the governed. Gramsci also refers to the ethical state in order to clarify the educative role of the state: "...every state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the need of the productive forces for development and therefore to the interests of the ruling classes."⁴⁶

It is through this schema of employment of coercion and consent, a better understanding of the class domination in a society becomes possible. It can be said that the two aspects of the modern state are "domination" and "intellectual and moral leadership". Thus it can be said that the modern state system is one of "hegemony

⁴⁶ J.Martin, no.43, p.47.

protected by the armour of coercion”.⁴⁷ Gramsci argues that consent is generated primarily by bodies outside the formal state structures “...but in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end, and which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling class.”⁴⁸ According to Gramsci, it is the civil society that reproduces ideological hegemony through institutions of every day life and cultural practices. And consent for the exercise of power is created through the institutions and practices of civil society. Civil society functions as the realm where the so-called private organizations like the church, the trade unions, the schools, the media, etc., are being moulded to forge out hegemony of the ruling classes.

The state is seen as an alliance of interests of non-capitalist classes also, then an overthrow of the political society would still mean that there exists vestiges of the old order in the civil society. Hence mere capture of the political society or state through a war of movement is not enough for the complete revolution. Towards this end, Gramsci suggests the creation of a counter-hegemony under the leadership of the proletariat in the realm of the civil society through a war of position. This expanded notion of state redefined the contours of class politics in modern capitalist societies. In these societies, the class domination manifests in efforts to adapt civil society to economic needs defined as “universal” and promoted on the particular interest of the bourgeoisie. Yet there will be a moment of crisis, when civil society gets detached

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

from the state and Gramsci termed this as “organic crisis”. Gramsci says that the modern liberal state fails when the bourgeoisie fails to create concrete structures within the civil society in an effort to defend and support the capitalist economy. This moment of crisis of the economy and polity is termed as the “organic crisis” or “the crisis of hegemony”. Organic crisis occurs as a result of contradictions which accumulate over time within a specific historical bloc, offsetting the institutionalized equilibrium of forces. Organic crisis in Gramsci, is always hegemonic crisis and they are produced either by the failure of the ruling class politics or by the sudden politicization of the subaltern classes. A typical example for the former is war and that of the latter is the Russian Revolution.⁴⁹ It is this situation of organic crisis that made Gramsci to seek alternative, transformative alliances through the creation of counter-hegemony.

The transformative order is brought about by the activities at the superstructural level. Gramsci’s non-reductionist conception of the classical base-superstructure relation gives a new dimension to the political transformation of a society – the cultural and political preparation at the realm of civil society. Thus it was possible to introduce the notion of “consciousness” into Marxist framework. Here Gramsci placed the subjective human being at the centre of political activity and argued for the creation of a national popular will from within the civil society.

⁴⁹ Leonardo Salamini, The Sociology of Political Praxis, An Introduction to Gramsci’s Theory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), pp.58-59.

The end of the state is another of Gramsci's theme where the concept of civil society has a primary role.⁵⁰ The withering away of the state is the establishment of a classless, communist society in classical Marxism. In Gramsci, this end of the state is conceived as the "reabsorption of political society into civil society." This society without a state comes from an enlarging of the civil society at the moment of hegemony and Gramsci termed this condition as "regulated society". In such a situation, the influence of the hegemonic class become so universal that the moment of coercion becomes superfluous.

For the liberals as well as for the Marxists, civil society is primary. But the parallel ends there. The Hegel-Marx-Gramsci combination has created an alternative tradition of civil society as against the liberal notion of the concept. They felt that the liberal representation of civil society should be contested. Marx and Gramsci saw the active role of civil society in the forward march of history. They felt that modern civil society appears as the essence of modern inhumanity. Further, Marx and Gramsci argued for the need for the civil society to be organized and transformed.

The term **hegemony** was one of the most central political slogans in the Russian Social Democratic Movement during the 1890s to 1917. The idea began to emerge first in the writings of Plekhanov in 1883-84; wherein he used the term 'domination' for political power as such. Later, his colleague Axelrod used the term to denote the primacy of the proletariat as a leading class. Then Lenin talked about

⁵⁰ N.Bobbio, no.38, p.41.

the need for a real hegemony of the working class in Russia. Lenin vehemently argued for a revolutionary consciousness that gives effect to the hegemony of the proletariat. Thus the term hegemony was one of the most widely used one in the debates of the Russian labour movement before the October Revolution. But this notion of hegemony is different from the notion of hegemony propounded by Lenin in the dictatorship of the proletariat. The transmission of the notion of hegemony to Gramsci, from the Russian to the Italian theatres of socialist movement can be with reasonable certainty be associated with the successive documents of the Comintern – for Gramsci’s own treatment of the term descends directly from the definitions of the Third International.⁵¹

Gramsci uses the term hegemony in two different senses: first it means the consensual basis of an existing political system within civil society. Here it is understood as against coercion and state’s monopoly to be the legitimate arbiter of all disputes. In its second sense, hegemony means an overcoming of the economic-corporative. The reference is to a particular historical stage within the political moment. The hegemonic level represents the advance to a “class consciousness”, where class is understood not only structurally, but also in terms of common intellectual and moral awareness – a common culture.

⁵¹ Perry Anderson, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci”. New Left Review, Vol.100, Special Number, 1977, p.18.

This purely political phase consists in the conversion of narrow economic demands into a broad and inclusive universal interest. Gramsci then categorises the activities of a class at this level.⁵² The first stage of 'economic-corporate level' consists of a slight degree of collective awareness among the members of a class, but with little or no collective organization. The next phase of solidarity is the creation of a collective consciousness bound by the immediate interests. The final stage transcends the narrow economic corporate limits and begins to articulate and coordinate the interests of the subordinate groups. This marks the decisive passage from the structure to the complex superstructure. This phase marks the stage in which the corporate interests of a class is being projected as the general interest of the civil society. This becomes the moment in which a class was propelled to exercise state power in the "integral sense", namely its hegemony. Gramsci argues that an alternative hegemony should be created before the achievement of a complete revolution – one that brings to power a coherent class formulation united behind a single economic, political and cultural conception of the world.⁵³

The concept of hegemony has two interrelated and dialectically interactive dimensions. The first dimension involves the material base that sustains any hegemony and the second dimension involves the superstructure that provides space to legitimize the hegemony. Thus the legitimization process happens at the

⁵² Martin, no.43, pp.83-84.

⁵³ Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (California: University of California, 1980), p.141.

superstructural level; which includes the ideological, ethical, religious, and cultural spheres of activities. Legitimacy is sought by the ruling class through consent, coercion and cooption from the society. A complete and neat definition of the Gramscian concept of hegemony is not possible. But a good working definition of hegemony is given by Gwyn Williams: "By 'hegemony' Gramsci seems to mean a sociopolitical situation, in his terminology a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious is implied."⁵⁴ Gramsci invokes the concept to characterise the distinct features of a modern state and also to outline the strategy for a revolutionary politics. Gramsci argued that the bourgeoisie elicit support from the subordinate classes by eliciting cultural and political support and further views that a class was able to promote popular consent to its rule in the form of "intellectual and moral leadership". Hegemony is understood as a mode of social control by one group over the other through means of ideology. Hegemony is exercised in a wider social and political constellation of forces or historical bloc – which refers to a historical congruence between material forces, institutions and ideologies, or broadly an

⁵⁴ Quoted in Anne Showstack Sasson, "Hegemony, War of Position and Political Intervention" in A.S. Sasson (ed.), Approaches to Gramsci (London: Writers and Readers, 1982), p.94.

alliance of different class forces.

The concept of hegemony first appeared in the *Notes on the Southern Question* as follows: "The Turin communists posed concretely the question of the 'hegemony of the proletariat': i.e. of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers' State. The proletariat can become the leading (*dirigente*) and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois state. In Italy, in the real class relation which exist there, this means to the extent that it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses."⁵⁵ The concept of hegemony is the organizing focus of Gramsci's thought on politics and ideology and its distinctive usage has rendered it the hallmark of the Gramscian approach in general. Hegemony is best understood as the organization of consent – the process through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion. Gramsci felt that the popular culture and knowledge could be used to suit the interest of the ruling bloc. Thus, intervening at the realm of the civil society, the dominant class constructs the consciousness of the individual and of the collectivity. This constructed consciousness functions as the sphere where the ruling class elicits consent from the whole of the society. Gramsci conceptualizes the production of consent through the use of symbols and mythologies, institutions and practices through hegemony. Gramsci argues that it is through the creation of hegemony by the dominant class that a hegemonic bloc is

⁵⁵ Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), p.178.

created, which sustains the ruling system. This hegemonic bloc can be created through compromises and concessions of an economic-corporative kind. Gramsci writes: "The fact of hegemony presupposes that account is taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain balance of compromise should be formed – in other words that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporative kind. But there is no doubt that although hegemony is ethico-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity."⁵⁶

Gramsci's innovation lies in extending the notion of hegemony to analyse the nature of western capitalist societies. Gramsci extended the notion of hegemony from its original application to the perspectives of the working class in a bourgeois revolution against a feudal order, to the mechanisms of bourgeois rule over the working class in a stabilized capitalist society. Gramsci employed the concept of hegemony towards a differential analysis of the structures of bourgeois power in the West.⁵⁷ Gramsci was concerned with the constellation of bourgeois political power in an advanced capitalist system.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony goes beyond both an economic Marxist position which views consent as false ideology blinding the mass of the population to

⁵⁶ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.161.

⁵⁷ P. Anderson, p.20.

the reality of the state power and conditions of exploitation, and the Weberian idea of consent which legitimizes a certain pre-existing social order.⁵⁸ Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony in an attempt to analyse the state in the period of imperialism and the dominance of monopoly and finance capital.⁵⁹ Gramsci's conception of hegemony evolves in the context of civil/political society dichotomy, the integral state system and the employment of consent/coercion at the moment of hegemony. Gramsci argued that the division of political society and civil society enables to understand the class domination in a capitalist system. He argues that it is at the realm of political society that the coercive apparatus is employed to ensure the conformation of the popular masses to the type of production and economy a given moment. And it is at the realm of the civil society, the hegemony of the ruling class is exercised through different institutions and apparatuses of hegemony. For Gramsci, the stress over civil society and the employment of hegemony over its terrain, gives the view that hegemony is the politicization of civil society at the moment of transformation and after.

Gramsci's notion of hegemony goes beyond simple class alliances and becomes the union of political leadership and intellectual and moral leadership. Gramsci writes, "...the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates

⁵⁸ Christine Buci-Glucksmann, "Hegemony and Consent: A Political Strategy" in Chantal Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1979), p.116.

⁵⁹ Sassoon, no.54, pp.97-105.

antagonistic groups, which it tends to “liquidate”, or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindered and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise “leadership” before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power....”⁶⁰ Gramsci always thought that the political struggle in a bourgeois society cannot be a simple reductionist one. Instead he believed that it involves a complex relations of force. In Gramscian scheme, class struggle involves not only the capture of state power, but also of demystification of ideas and ideologies of the bourgeois world order. Gramsci talks of the hegemonic moment as one “in which one becomes aware that one’s own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too.”⁶¹ Thus the political moment is characterised by the ideological struggle which attempts to forge unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives on a “universal” level, and creates the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate ones.

Gramsci distinguishes two principal routes for a class to become hegemonic,⁶² the first is that of transformism and the other of expansive hegemony. The former one is achieved through a “passive consensus” and Gramsci termed the attainment of

⁶⁰ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, pp.57-58.

⁶¹ Mouffe, no.55, p.180.

⁶² Ibid.,pp.182-83.

power through this method as “passive revolution”. He feels that it is “passive”, because the masses are integrated through a system of absorption and neutralisation of their interests in such a way as to prevent them from opposing those of the hegemonic class. Whereas, the expansive hegemony consists in the creation of an active, direct consensus resulting from the genuine adoption of the interests of the popular classes by the hegemonic class, which would, further, give rise to the creation of a genuine ‘national-popular will’. Hence in an expansive hegemony the whole society must advance and hence the class contradictions also gets resolved. Gramsci argues that the working class is the only class that can bring about an expansive hegemony. Thus the expansive hegemony of the proletariat is attained by the successful integration of the society under the proletariat class.

Gramsci views hegemony as a higher synthesis where the interests of the hegemonic bloc is reconciled through the mediation of **ideology**. The genuine ideological unity among different social groups functions as a character towards the creation of a collective will – a unified political subject. Thus it is the ideology of the dominant class that gives coherence to the hegemonic bloc. Gramsci views ideology as a positive moment and strongly opposes any move to associate ideology with “false consciousness”. He writes, “The claim, presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony

of Marx, the author of concrete political and historical works.”⁶³ Gramsci feels that the starting point of all research on ideology must be Marx’s assertion that “men gain consciousness of their tasks on the ideological terrain of the superstructures,” and Gramsci viewed ideology as; “they (ideologies) ‘organize’ human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc.”⁶⁴ Gramsci viewed ideology as a terrain of battle ground of continuous struggle and argued that it is ideology that creates subjects and makes them act and that ideology has material existence. “In effect Gramsci considers that a world view is manifest in all action and that this expresses itself in a very elaborate form and at high level of abstraction – as is the case with philosophy – or else it is expressed in much simpler forms as the expression of ‘common sense’ which represents itself as the spontaneous philosophy of the man in the street, but which is the popular expression of ‘higher’ philosophies.”⁶⁵ For Gramsci, this world-views are communal and it organises the human masses, and Gramsci termed them as “organic ideologies”. It organic ideologies are world-views of determinate social blocs and Gramsci’s view that ideology is the terrain where men acquire consciousness, it implies that all forms of consciousness are political. This enables Gramsci to make the following equation: “philosophy=ideology=politics”.⁶⁶

⁶³ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.207.

⁶⁴ Mouffe, no.55, p.185.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.186.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Further, Gramsci suggests that organic ideologies can be distinguished from arbitrary speculation of individuals. Gramsci also views ideology in the sense of the arbitrary speculation of individuals. This distinction parallels to some extent the opposition between ideology and world-view. Here Gramsci endorses the view of Marx that “a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force” and writes, “The analysis of this propositions tends, I think, to reinforce the conception of historical bloc in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces.”⁶⁷

Gramsci emphasized the formation of a collective will through the negotiation of ideology in a hegemonic bloc. This creation of a new hegemony implies the transformation of the previous ideological terrain and the creation of a new world-view which will serve as a unifying principle for a collective will. This process of ideological transformation is termed by Gramsci as the “moral and intellectual reform”. Gramsci views hegemony as a moment where the dominant social group exercising a political, intellectual and moral role of leadership within a hegemonic system through the negotiation of an organic ideology.

⁶⁷ Michele Barrett, “Ideology, Politics, Hegemony, From Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe” in Slavoj Zizeki (ed.), Mapping Ideology (New York: Verso, 1994).

In this context, Gramsci talks of a democratisation process within the hegemonic system, "Hegemony and Democracy. Of the many meanings of democracy, the most realistic and concrete one in my view can be worked out in relation to the concept of 'hegemony'. In the hegemonic system, there exists democracy between the 'leading' group and the groups which are 'led', in so far as the development of the economy and thus the legislation which expresses such development favour the (molecular) passage from the 'led' groups to the 'leading' group."⁶⁸ Again Gramsci feels that if a class wish to be hegemonic, it has to nationalize itself. Gramsci says that a successful hegemony is one which manages to create a 'collective national-popular will' and for this to happen the dominant class must be capable of articulating its hegemonic principle to all national popular ideological elements i.e. a class becomes hegemonic when it tries to articulate and accommodate to its discourse all national-popular ideological elements. Thus this class can 'nationalise' itself.

Thus to win hegemony, in Gramsci's view is to establish moral, political and intellectual leadership in social life by diffusing one's own 'world-view' throughout the fabric of the society as a whole, thus equating one's own interests with the interest of society at large. To Gramsci, this consensual nature of rule is dominant in the capitalist societies. But it is also likely that the bourgeois rule may be forced to use force. This happens at the moment of crisis in the civil society and comes at the expense of the ideological credibility of the bourgeois state. Once power is exercised

⁶⁸ Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.56.

blatantly it becomes an object of political contestation. At this juncture, the civil society gets detached from the state is the break down of the liberal regime. This break down of the liberal regime – this bourgeois hegemonic crisis – is seen as a move towards a hegemony of the proletariat. Gramsci argues that a pragmatic Marxist analysis is one that should comprehend an organic crisis. Gramsci refers to this organic crisis as “In any country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the context is the crisis of the ruling class’s hegemony, which occur either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly imposed, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example) or because huge masses (especially of peasant and petit bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which in their disorganic-whole constitute revolution. A ‘crisis of authority’ is spoken of, and this is precisely the crisis of hegemony or general crisis of the state.”⁶⁹

Gramsci’s thought on the strategy of the working class towards socialist transformation is organized around the conception of hegemony. Gramsci talks of a ‘collective man’ or a ‘collective will’ in a society. From here Gramsci moves on to the conclusion that political struggle does not only takes place between two fundamental antagonistic classes, since the ‘political subjects’ are not social classes but ‘collective wills’ which comprised of an ensemble of social groups focused

⁶⁹ Quoted in J. Martin, no.43, p.130.

around a fundamental class.⁷⁰ The revolutionary process should move beyond the strict class lines and should take into account a double process of: the self-awareness of oneself as an autonomous group, and the creation of a basis of consensus.⁷¹ Thus the working class should become the national class by representing the interests of the increasingly numerous social groups. For this to happen, the proletariat must disintegrate the hegemonic bloc of the bourgeoisie. And once this condition is achieved, the working class can rearticulate a new ideological system towards the creation of an expansive hegemonic bloc. This process of forging out an expansive hegemonic bloc is termed by Gramsci as “war of position” – which is conceived as the best suitable strategy towards a socialist transformation in an advanced capitalist society. In effect ‘war of position’ is best understood as the ideological struggle between the fundamental classes to bring to its fold the non-class ideological elements. Gramsci says, in politics once the war of position is won, it becomes a decisive moment. Further Gramsci viewed that in politics the war of position is the conception of hegemony. Finally the war of position viewed by Gramsci as the struggle for hegemony within all the anti-capitalist sectors also explains Gramsci’s insistence on the ‘national’ character of the struggle.

The distinction between the war of position and the war of movement was initially a military one. But Gramsci extended it to the political level with much caution. War of movement/manoeuvre denotes a frontal attack against the enemy

⁷⁰ Mouffe, no.55, pp.196-97.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.197.

power base. Where as the war of position indicates a prolonged series of attacks on the outer defense. The political metaphor goes like this: in modern states, the civil society function as the trenches that protect the state system. And when the state system is attacked through a frontal assault, the sturdy civil society appears. Hence it is essential to launch a prolonged struggle to take control of the civil society.

Gramsci argues that war of position is the strategy that should be adopted by the working class in an advanced capitalist society. Again he says that once the war of position is won, it is a decisive moment. Through the concept of war of position, Gramsci takes into consideration the political and cultural obstacles to revolution. Eric Hobsbawm argues that war of position is an essential strategy for any revolutionary movement.

Gramsci argues that the social structure/class is organically linked to the political/ideological superstructure through intellectuals. Class and its organizations functions at the superstructural level and this influences the development of the structure. Again in the final analysis, it is the structure that influences the superstructure – thus completing the dialectical relationship. The superstructure will be transformed when the two forces comes together: one that exerted from above by the working class intellectuals, who steadily replaces the bourgeois hegemony and the other that exerted from below by the masses who bear with themselves the new social order that has grown from their labour. The transformation occurs only when these two forces act harmoniously as an historical bloc. And this dialectical relationship

between the structure and superstructure function as the moment of forward march of history. Gramsci sees a pivotal role for the party in bringing the intellectuals and the masses into a single disciplinary force. The party is the Modern prince; the only agent, the conglomeration of forces that can bring out true political change.

Gramsci invokes the Machiavellian concept of the 'Prince' and adapt it to the modern situation. Gramsci argues that, 'The Modern Prince', the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, but can only be an organism; a complex element of society in which the cementing of the collective will has already begun. Thus the modern prince can function as an organizer of a national-popular collective will and thus towards the realisation of a higher and total form of modern civilization. The task of the party is to navigate in a given political situation and to assess the possibilities inherent in a historical bloc. This assessment would include an assessment of the base-superstructure organic link, in seeking opportunities to win over allies, disseminate ideology and gradually build up an alternative bloc of support. This was termed as the war of position and constitutes one of the enduring legacies of the theory of revolutionary politics. Even though Gramsci conceived of a dialectical relationship between party and the masses, at later stages, he stood for a centralised, Leninist version of the party. At one time Gramsci even argued that the party should wear the role of God as a symbolic identification for its followers. But it is clear that Gramsci did not view an absolute centrism, instead, he was very much confident about the collective will of the proletariat.

Gramsci attributed the source of his notion of historical bloc to Georges Sorel. Gramsci felt that the state and society constituted a solid structure and that revolution envisages the development of another structure from within and capable to replacing the existing. Echoing Marx, Gramsci thought that this could come about only when the existing system had exhausted to its full potential. Whether dominant or emerging, such a structure is what Gramsci called an historical bloc. "Structure and superstructures form a 'historical bloc' That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production."⁷² For Gramsci, the historical bloc is regarded as a mutually interdependent whole and recognizes a necessary reciprocity between the two – the economic relations of production and the superstructural realm of state and civil society. The cultural unity of reciprocal relationship between the political, ethical and ideological spheres with the economic spheres, gives an anti-economistic view to social reality.

Thus, through a critical understanding of the capitalist, bourgeois societies of the West, Gramsci advanced a revolutionary transformative politics. His 'philosophy of praxis' is heavily entrenched in the Marxian framework. But, Gramsci had brought forth profound innovations in this framework. Through this attempt Gramsci outlived not only the fascist prison, but also his times.

⁷² Gramsci, SPN, no.8, p.366.

CHAPTER-III

WORLD ORDER/S IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A GRAMSCIAN PERSPECTIVE

It is possible to reconstruct International Political Economy on the basis of Marxian/Gramscian social ontology and, thereby, to have a better understanding of the international capitalist system.¹ Both Marx and Gramsci were engaged in a critical understanding of the existing social order and then, delineated a possible, radical alternative. Marx and Gramsci were engaged in an analysis of the capitalist mode of production and stood for the creation of a revolutionary new order. While Marx had done the demystification of the capitalist structure, Gramsci went on to elaborate the superstructures – thus completing a revolutionary project. Marx constructs his critique of capitalism from the perspective of an alienated labour and from the vantage point of the relation of state and civil society.² The labour, while engaging in the production process, gets alienated from the nature, from themselves and from one another. Marxist critique of alienation is aimed at the contradiction between the historical possibilities and the historical actualities which capitalism has brought into being.

A Marxian critique of the capitalist system evolves through the delineation of Marxian political economy. And Marxian political economy emerges out of the

¹ Mark Rupert, "Alienation, Capitalism and the Inter-State System: Towards a Marxian/Gramscian Critique" in Stephen Gill (ed.), Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.67.

² *Ibid.*, pp.68-68.

critique of classical political economy. The origin of economics as a separate domain could be traced back to the advent of capitalism. Once the propertied class flourishes through surplus value creation and appropriation, the state that represents the interest of the propertied class felt it convenient not to intervene in this appropriation. This distinction got reflected in the analysis of classical political economy and we get the notion of self-maximizing individuals coexisting in a society. Thus, we have the notion of a self-regulating economy and a civil society and an extraneous polity manifested in the form of state machinery. The state went out of the purview of economic activity, and this situation was institutionalized through a 'self-regulating' market mechanism. Thus society was seen as a non-political, economic entity and was seen as harmonious if the state does not intervene.

The essence of Marxism is the attempt in understanding the society in its entirety; that no social phenomenon can be studied in isolation. Further, a social phenomenon can be explained only when placed in a historical context. Marx argues that a given human society is materially and socially constituted and hence politically contestable. Hence Marx integrates politics and economics and gives a class nature to it. Marx demystifies capital by arguing that capital is a coercive social power on the basis of which industrial capitalists exploit industrial workers.

Marx criticized the view that capitalism is a natural phenomenon. Instead, he proved that capitalism is materially and socially constituted and is only one of the phases in human history and, if so, capitalism can be politically contested too.

Through the wage-labour mechanism and through the exchange mechanism in a seemingly neutral market, a class-based society is formed, a class who owns the means of production and another class who doesn't. A coercive social relation resting on domination and appropriation reinforces this class-based society. The private ownership of means of production in the hands of the few becomes the central feature of capitalism. Thus capitalist system becomes a set of social relations which reproduces a particular class relation – a relationship that alienates the workers and masses from the production process and that which enforces the power structures of exploitation and appropriation. The capitalist system moves on the wheels of massive accumulation and it remains as the dominant factor. The characteristic of a capitalist system is that it rewards accumulation per se and tends to eliminate individuals or groups, who resist its logic. The double role played by the direct producer; one as a consumer and other as the sole creator of surplus value functions as the basic contradiction of the capitalist system. Again monopolistic tendencies within the system also function against the system. Further, the spatial dimension of the expansionist tendencies of capital also functions as a hindrance to its development.

Marx, by arguing that a given society is materially and socially constituted and by contextualising a social phenomenon historically and analysing it in its entirety, has ideologically contested the compartmentalized view of classical political economy. Further he stripped capitalism of its veneer of naturalness and perfection and proved that capitalism is a socially constructed phenomenon and so is the market.

This, coupled with the Marxian critique of modern state, completes the alienation of human beings from all possible social relations. However, Marx argues that this process of alienation within the capitalist system can be transcended.

Gramsci, while expounding his 'philosophy of praxis', was attempting to transcend this capitalist order. His project encompasses the dialectical relations between state and society, coercion and consent as well as military and cultural aspects of struggle. He was concerned with the political and ideological struggle in an advanced capitalist society. He was interested in explaining the ideological structure of the dominant class and, further, continuously harped on the creation of proletarian civilization and culture.³ Thus Gramsci was interested in the replacement of the bourgeois cultural consciousness with that of the proletariat. Gramsci envisages the creation of this counter- culture through the creation of a hegemonic bloc under the leadership of the proletariat. And this hegemony is exercised over the terrain of civil society. This counter-hegemonic, moral-political project involves the creation of a historical bloc, whereby, the anti-capitalist section of the society is organized under the leadership of the proletariat. This creation of the historical bloc is the precondition for the attainment of hegemony in a society. And the historical bloc goes beyond simple class alliances and it articulates a world-view through a teleological consensus. As opposed to the passive revolution by the bourgeoisie, the expansive hegemony strives towards the dissolution of the dichotomies entangled in the

³ Rajan Harshe, Twentieth Century Imperialism: Shifting Contours and Changing Conceptions (New Delhi: Sage, 1997), p.152.

bourgeoisie society; like politics/economics, coercion/consent, state/society etc. to the culmination of the establishment of a stateless and classless society, wherein, the human beings can be the masters of their own destiny and, thereby, the possibility of the creation of a new socialist order may get realized.

A Marxian/Gramscian ontology would argue that international politics is historically embedded in and internally related to the capitalist social relations. Further, the modern state system functions in the context of alienation. Gramsci, through this concept of hegemony, goes beyond the national scenario to the international one. Gramsci writes: "...the international situation should be considered in its national aspect. In reality, the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is 'original' and (in a certain sense) unique; these relations must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them. To be sure, the line of development is towards international, but the point of departure is 'national' – and it is from this point of departure that one must begin. Yet the perspective is international and cannot be otherwise".⁴ Thus Gramsci sees beyond the national-based conception of politics and views the creation of hegemony as an educational relationship that goes beyond the national boundaries to the complexes of national and continental civilizations.⁵ Gramsci argues that long-term, structural changes in the international power relations

⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Madras: Orient Longman Limited, 1996), p.240.

⁵ M. Rupert, no.2, p.87.

could be traced to fundamental changes in the national social relations. Gramsci writes, "Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through its technical-military expressions, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too."⁶ Thus, for Gramsci, the perspective is international, but the basic concern remains at the national scenario. It is the national fundamental hegemonic potentials that get expanded and transcend the national boundaries.

Robert Cox's seminal essay, Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations (1983) remains the pioneering work in applying Gramscian concepts at the global level. Further, Stephen Gill (1993) and others followed up this methodological exposition. In India, one can take the work done by Aijaz Ahmed (1993) in analysing fascism and, that of a rigorous analysis of the twentieth century capitalism by Rajan Harshe (1997). We will be devoting our attention to the works done by Cox, Gill and Harshe, for a comprehensive explanation of the 'new world order'. In fact, of late, some of the developments in global capitalist economy compel one to take resort to Gramscian concepts for a better understanding of the system. The internationalisation of production, the high mobility of capital and massive advancement in the technological field makes room for advancement in classical Marxism too. In the new scenario, the classical wage-labour equation remains redundant. In a situation of new form of appropriation, resorting to new forms of

⁶ Gramsci, SPN, no.4, p.176.

resistance becomes important. And for transforming the system, as Marx said, a critical analysis of the system is absolutely essential. And Gramsci gives hope towards this end.

Cox brings out an abstract schema to explain a historical structure. He argues that a historical structure is influenced by three categories of forces.⁷ This reciprocal relationship functions among the material capabilities, ideas and institutions. Of which, ideas and institutions are useful in explaining world orders based on Gramscian concepts. Ideas are of two kinds: one consists of inter-subjective meanings, or those shared notions of the nature of social relations which tend to perpetuate habits and expectations of behavior, and the other collective images of social order held by different groups of people. Inter-subjective meanings in contemporary world politics are like the one of the conventional role of the state system. And inter-subjective meanings are broadly common throughout a particular historical structure and constitute the common ground of social discourse. On the other hand, collective images are several and opposed, like the nature of the legitimacy of the prevailing power relations. Institutions reflect the power relations prevailing at their point of origin and function as a means of stabilizing and perpetuating a particular order. Further, institutions function as a synthesis of ideas and material power and, in turn, influence the development of ideas and material capabilities. This stabilization process comes about through a consensus and hence, a

⁷ Robert W. Cox and Timothy J. Sinclair, Approaches to World Order (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.98-99.

minimal use of force. Cox argues that this situation is closely connected to one of Gramscian hegemony.⁸ As in a hegemonic situation, the dominance of the strong states over the weak states comes through a legitimate consensus. The strong states will secure the acquiescence of the weak through a hegemonic mission, wherein the interest of the strong state is expressed in terms of universal or general interests, rather than particular interests. But Cox cautions us that institutionalisation is only an aspect of hegemony and cannot be subsumed under hegemony.

Cox illustrates his scheme through an analysis of international organizations. He says that one mechanism through which the universal norms of a world hegemony are expressed is the international organizations.⁹ Cox identifies different roles performed by international organization in exercising a world hegemony: (a) they embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of world orders; (b) they ideologically legitimate the norms of world order; (c) they co-opt the elite from the peripheral countries in the manner of *transformismo* and in the process absorb counter-hegemonic ideas.¹⁰ Cox argues that international institutions embody rules which facilitate the expansion of the dominant social forces. The world monetary and trade systems are classic examples to this. These mechanisms, through a said consensus, function primarily to promote the economic expansion of the hegemonic state. Further, international organizations perform an ideological role of legitimizing the

⁸ Ibid., p.91.

⁹ Ibid., pp.137-139.

¹⁰ Cited in Harshe, no.3, p.177.

policy decisions at the national level. This legitimization takes place in the interest of the international capital. Again through the international organizations, the elite from the peripheral countries are co-opted into the hegemonic system. Through a process of *transformismo*, these elite and any counter-hegemonic ideas are coopted and made consistent with the hegemonic doctrine. The changing nature of the meaning of self-reliance of national economies is a good example of this co-option.

The classical gold standard, which ended with the First World War, was maintained in the core countries at the expense of the periphery. The success was limited to the most advanced countries, which formed the core system, whereas in other countries, especially in Latin America, the currencies fluctuated widely and depreciated enormously.¹¹

The end of the First World War saw the end of the classical gold standard and the inability of Britain to continue its pivotal role in the international monetary scenario. After this came the purely floating exchange rate mechanism for a short period. Then came the great depression of the 1930s and the subsequent political conflict. The post-war order of the Bretton Woods institutions gave the U.S. dollar a privileged position and dollar became the international vehicle currency. The shifting contours of the global politics in the post-war period gave the U.S. an opportunity to manage the global capitalism. Susan Strange argues that this post-war order was

¹¹ Benjamin J. Cohen, Organizing the World's Money, The Political Economy of International Monetary Relations (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p.81.

imposed by the U.S. hegemony on the lukewarm Europeans and a quiescent third world and, provided rules for the liberation of trade and the management of exchange rate between currencies.¹² With the collapse of the Bretton Woods system came the present flexible exchange rate mechanism. This period saw the massive influx of petro dollars into the international financial system and international banks became the bedrock of international monetary system, with state acting as guarantor. It is argued that the present flexible exchange rate system has caused major macro-economic instability in many third world nations.¹³ Thus the international monetary order, by setting out the framework for the expansion of the international capital, facilitated the world orders expounded by the British colonialism and later of the U.S. imperialism.

Cox argues that hegemony at the international level is not merely an order among nations, but an order within a world economy, wherein, the dominant mode of production and, more so, the social relations of production gets permeated into all of the states or to those allies, that come under the purview of the hegemonic order. The hegemonic order is also a complex social relationship that connects the social classes of the different countries. Cox says that historically, the powerful hegemonic states had undergone internal social and economic revolution and these energies are unleashed beyond the national boundaries. And a world hegemonic order gets

¹² Susan Strange, States and Market: An Introduction to International Political Economy (London: Printer Publishers, 1988), p.102.

¹³ Dominick Salvatore, "International Monetary System: Present and Future" in H.W. Singer Hatti and Tandon (eds.), Aid and External Financing in the 1990s (New Delhi, 1991), p.567.

established when this national hegemonic moment begins to transcend the national boundaries. This happens when the combination of national social structure, an economic structure and a political structure is expressed in universal norms, institutions and culture. To sum it up, Cox succinctly describes the nature and operation of hegemony in international relations: "Hegemony is a structure of values and understandings about the nature of the order that permeates a whole system of states and non-state entities. In a hegemonic order, these values and understandings are relatively stable and unquestioned. They appear to most actors as natural order. Such a structure of meaning is underpinned by a structure of power, in which one state is dominant but that state's dominance is not sufficient to create hegemony. Hegemony derives from the dominant social strata of the dominant states in so far as these ways of doing and thinking have acquired the acquiescence of the dominant social strata of other states."¹⁴

Cox gives a different dimension to the concept of hegemonic order at the international level as follows: "The world can be represented as a pattern of interacting social forces in which states play an intermediate though autonomous role between the global structure of social forces and local configuration of social forces within particular countries. This may be called a political-economy perspective of the world: power is seen as emerging from social processes..."¹⁵ Cox says that in applying the concept of hegemony to world order, it is important to determine when a

¹⁴ Quoted in Harshe, no.3, p.177.

¹⁵ Cox, no.7, p.105.

period of hegemony begins and when it ends. A period in which a world hegemony has been established can be called hegemonic and one in which dominance of a non-hegemonic kind prevails can be called a non-hegemonic one. Cox illustrates, roughly, how the past century and a half can be distinguished into three periods.¹⁶

The three successive world orders are divided based on the dialectical relation of production, forms of state and different configuration of world order. These three structures are (i) the liberal international economy (1789-1873); (ii) the era of rival imperialism (1873-1945); and (iii) the neo-liberal world order (post-World War II).

The first period was a hegemonic period under the British. The *pax britannica* was a period when British supremacy was founded on its sea power. Liberal economic doctrines consistent with British interests, but universal in form – comparative advantage, free trade and the gold standard – spread gradually outward from Britain. While there were no international institutions, the liberal notion of separation of politics and economics meant that the city could appear as regulation of these universal rules with the British sea power remaining as a reserve enforcer. In the second period, all these hegemonic features got reversed. The balance of power in Europe was destabilized and the British supremacy was challenged. This period saw two world wars and also saw the fragmentation of the world economy into economic blocs. And this was a non-hegemonic period.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.135-36.

In third period of the neo-liberal world order, the United States found a new hegemonic order with complex institutions and doctrines suitable to the changed world scenario. This period of monopoly capitalism saw the internationalisation of production and the globalisation of the finance capital. The U.S. commanded a wide measure of consent among its allies, and was able to provide sufficient benefits to them in order to maintain their acquiescence. Of course, consent wore thin as one approached the periphery where the elements of force were as always apparent.

This post-war capitalist international order dominated by the US has a major impact on contemporary international relations. The economic and politico-military aspect of this US hegemony is widely dealt. But those dealing with the ideological underpinnings of US hegemony are quite uncommon. Stephen Gill's work is one that falls in this category. Gill attempts to understand the post-war capitalism as it operates under the shadow of liberal ideology. The United States, being the leading liberal capitalist, has been mainly responsible for the spread of liberal ideology and capitalism across the world. Harshe (1997) has summarised this aspect of Gill as follows.¹⁷

Gill describes the attainment of the hegemonic moment within a wider social and political constellation of forces or historical bloc, which refers to a historical

¹⁷ Harshe, no.3, p.179.

congruence between material forces, institutions and ideologies.¹⁸ He maintains that ideology has the potential of becoming an expression of the world-view of a class and, liberalism as an ideology has consistently represented the world-view of the bourgeois classes. Liberal ideologies believe in private initiative and limit the scope of state intervention. In the political realm, Liberalism promotes electoral democracy and civil and political rights. The expansive tendencies of capital have contributed to the growth of transnational liberalism. And Gill argues that transnational liberalism as an economic doctrine and political ideology is primarily serving the interests of the transnational capital.

Liberal democracy separates politics and economics and applies democracy to the political sphere by which, individuals are treated as citizens having equal rights. But in the economic field, the private property is the criteria for rights. Of late, there is a widespread depoliticisation feeling among the common masses. And this phenomenon is acute among the poor who are severely affected by the wave of capitalism. It can be noted that this phenomenon goes hand in hand with the success of new wave of globalization. By separating politics and economics, the day-to-day destiny of the people is decided not by the people but, by someone else. Thus politics, which deals with their day-to-day life becomes irrelevant for the common

¹⁸ Stephen Gill (ed.), Gramsci, Historical Materials and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.93-94.

masses. Thus, the masses are left alienated from the system.¹⁹

The liberal order should be understood beyond the economic terms. Managing the multilateral economic relations through a constellation of institutions becomes only one aspect of the liberal order. The broader fabric of doctrines and practices associated with liberation is the hallmark of the liberal state in the West. This broader fabric includes the liberal democratic governance of the state, the configuration of civil society based on rights, claims to self-determination, and domestic market economies.²⁰ Latham argues that this constitutes a version of liberal modernity that got strengthened in the West through the establishment of a system wide political relation, which places the US at the centre. These systems of relations include the NATO, the G-7, the Bretton Woods institutions, the UN etc.²¹ It was this aspect of the liberal modernity constituted the discursive and practical dimensions of a liberal international order. This liberal international order, with the US at the centre, can be considered as a core of states, all of which possess a common underlying approach to international relations and domestic politics.

This conception of the liberal international order with in the core capitalist countries of the West, and the potential of the U.S. to become the hegemony was absolutely a fit category to revoke the Gramscian concept of hegemony. And Gill

¹⁹ Cox, no. 7, pp.532-33.

²⁰ Robert Latham, "Liberalism's Order/Liberalism's Other: A Genealogy of Threat", Alternatives, Vol.20, No.1, 1995, p.115.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.119.

conceptualizes the situation by arguing that these core countries had witnessed rapid internal changes from time to time to have a consensual agenda that gives coherence to the core nations. Of late, the transnational corporations (TNCs) have played a vital role in the realignment of the social forces in these core countries. This realignment takes place only within the framework of US hegemony and of safeguarding the interests of the dominant capitalist class.

Gill argues that the Trilateral Commission was founded to forge out a strategic consensus between the U.S. and its allies to ensure the growth of transnational capital and organize its hegemony. Further, Gill argues that towards a consensus within the core countries, several steps were taken in the realm of the international civil society too.²² This effort of the realm of civil society was possible because the material base of production had tied up the societies of core countries with the evolution of post-war capitalism. The dynamism associated with capitalist system has brought about sea changes in the functioning of capitalism.

This change in the functioning of capitalism became quite clear through the emergence of a transnational historic bloc.²³ "This bloc was dominated by the interests of transnational mobile capital. In the process of gaining legitimacy it incorporated a range of class interests which sustained not only the modernization of the mixed economies under social democracies of the West, but also the liberal

²² Harshe, no.3, p.182.

²³ Gill, no.18, p.96.

international economic order. The blocs' foundation was forged in a balance between the material forces of national and international capital, organized labour and the state."²⁴

In forging out an ideological consensus that gave coherence to the historical bloc, the services of a large number of organic intellectuals were sought by the capital. Towards this end, the Trilateral Commission worked through organizations like Council of Foreign Relations, the Committee on Economic Development and Ford Foundation. Gill has referred to instances where the towering intellectuals in the West were coopted into the bloc. These organic intellectuals endeavor to build consensus among corporate, financial, university, civic, and government circles around major policy decisions.²⁵ Thus, Gill has successfully demonstrated through Gramscian ideals, the creation and sustenance of an international historic bloc of social forces and a hegemonic order under the leadership of the united states, and that which safeguard the interest of the transnational capital.

Hegemony, hence, is invoked to serve the interest of the capital in so far as it fulfilled the function of social order by uniting various groups, classes and institutions behind a general project. James Martin (1998) has described three interpretation of the use of hegemony in the present period.²⁶ First, work done by Marxists like Perry

²⁴ Harshe, no.3, p.183.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ James Martin, Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1998), pp.120-25.

Anderson and Ralph Miliband on the nature of elite culture in Britain. Second, the work by Nicos Poulantzas on the nature of the capitalist state. And finally, the work done by cultural theorists in Britain on Thatcherism as a hegemonic strategy. Anderson and Miliband argue that a relatively coherent elite culture was identifiable in the British establishment that tended to pacify political opposition and inhibited forms of resistance amongst the working class. The elite culture present in the system tries to flatten out class antagonism and promote only gradual reformism. They invoke the concept to characterise the form of political domination exercised by the bourgeoisie through the state mechanisms. Anderson talks about the role of cultural institutions that effectively neutralized radical opposition to the British State. While Miliband explains how political socialisation of the masses into values and beliefs of the capitalist society through state and non-state actors generated a culture of conformity favourable to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Poulantzas also affirmed the importance of hegemony in properly understanding the political and ideological aspect of class domination. He gave a new dimension to the nature of capitalist state by arguing that the cohesion of the capitalist state requires only the balance of class forces and it is not necessary for the state to function as the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie. His invoking of Gramscian concepts did bring a rigour into Marxist political analysis – into the theory of class politics.

While earlier political theorists used Gramscian concepts to analyse the political institution, theorists in cultural studies made use of hegemony to examine popular culture and ideology at a more local level. Gramsci's interest on 'common

sense' and 'folklore' revealed a rare depth of sympathy for the lived experiences of subordinate classes. For Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams, hegemony implied the bringing together of a variety of belief and values that did not necessarily reflect any class interest. Hall along with Jacques argues that the advent of Thatcher as the leader of the British conservative party in the mid 1970s inaugurated a radical assault on the increasingly precarious 'social democratic consensus' that both the major parties shared in the post-war period. This assault took the form of an authoritarian populism that was ideologically distinct by virtue of its appeal to 'common sense' values such as law and order, the family, the national identity, the Protestant work ethics, individual autonomy from the state structures and trade unions etc.²⁷ By strategically deploying these categories in a loosely organized ideology, Thatcher and her supporters appealed to a sense of crisis that had already been in the offing for a while. Even though the economic crisis was a real phenomenon, Thatcherism provided an appealing framework through which the 'narration' of the crisis was made pretext for the support of neo-liberal socio-economic policies. The result was the significant reconstitution of the consensual basis of support, which sustained the Thatcher government throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This was echoed by Gill: "In Britain, Thatcherism involved not just a change in policies but a conscious effort to change ideas and expectations about the appropriate role of government, the importance of private enterprise and the virtues of markets. The aim has been to

²⁷ Ibid., p.124.

convince voters that 'there is no alternative' to Thatcherism."²⁸

The structural and behavioral dimension of transnational capital have increased enormously in the post-World War II period.²⁹ And along side the spread of transnational capital is the emergence of a transnational civil society in its nascent form. The emergence of the transnational civil society is characterized by the emergence of transnational social classes that are primarily interested in safeguarding the interest of transnational capital.³⁰ This global class structure, along side or superimposed upon national class structures, has its own ideology, strategy and institutions. And at the apex of this global class is the transnational managerial class having its links with the sections of the national bourgeoisie.³¹ Alejandro Colas, while describing the international dimension of civil society, echoes the same; the association of civil society with the transnational capital.³² He defines international civil society as "the international space created by the expansion of capitalist relations of production where modern social movements pursue their political goals."³³ From a Marxian perspective, international civil society becomes synonymous with the global capitalist market, wherein, the organizations and corporations of capitalist production

²⁸ Stephen Gill and David Law, "Global, Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital" in Stephen Gill, no. 18, p.101.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Cited in Harshe, no.3, p. 181.

³¹ Cox, no. 7, p. 111.

³² Alejandro Colas, "The Promises of International Civil Society", Global Society (Kent). Vol.II, No.3, 1997, pp.269-271.

³³ Ibid., p.267.

and exchange come to embody the “economic space of the borderless civil society. And this space was given a political content through the activity of international social movements. Ronnie Lipschutz succinctly endorses this political aspect, “global civil society represents an ongoing project of civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, or remap world politics.”³⁴

The association of international civil society with the expansion of capital opens up the emergence of modern social movements. It is argued that liberalism creates suitable environment for global civil society. And global civil society is seen as an agent and sphere of a nascent world politics. Thus, non-state actors like social movements, interest groups, indigenous people, cultural groups and global citizens, are seen to be constructing networks and knowledge that entails a reshaping of the political structure of international relation.³⁵ And all modern social movements are premised on some form of universalism that goes beyond national boundaries. This terrain of international civil society is closely associated with the liberal values of democracy, justice and human rights. And international non-governmental organizations and other transnational movements like the international women’s movement, the peace movements, the environmental movement, the anti-nuclear movements, the progressive religious groups, etc. are the movements that operate on the terrain of a global civil society.

³⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.275.

³⁵ Mustapha Kamal Pasha and David L. Blancy, “Elusive Paradise: The Promise and Perils of Global Civil Society”, *Alternatives*, Vol.23, No.4, 1998, p.418.

As described above, the liberal ideology and its concomitant institutions are closely intertwined with the capitalist system. The neo-liberal agenda spreads across the globe through a massive consensus. The liberal capitalism, devoid of any organised and systematic opposition, runs down every aspect of human life. And the greatest conflict faced by the human society is the conflict existing between the capitalist forces and the majority who are at the receiving end of the expansion of international capital.

Bush's 'new world order' proclaimed the so-called victory of liberal capitalism and liberal democracy and is termed as 'the end of history' too. And this world order was nothing new and its sole intention was to oversee the management of global capitalism. "An American image of 'new world order' was first enunciated by Woodrow Wilson at the time of the birth of Soviet Communism. George Bush has now repeated it (with less flair, but in the face of less opposition) at the time of the death of Soviet Communism. The promulgation of a 'new world order' is intended to herald the demolition of the barriers to global, political and military, as well as economic domination by the major capitalist powers in an international system in which the United States is pre-eminent".³⁶

The new world order delineated by George Bush in the late 1980s has given way to globalization and, of late, globality in the 1990s. This globalisation of capital,

³⁶ Leo Panitch & Ralph Miliband, "The New World Order and the Socialist Agenda". Socialist Register (London), 1992, p.6.

when analysed in Marxist tradition, is the maturity of capitalism; which took forms like mercantilism, industrial capitalism, neo-colonialism and, of late, imperialism in the silicon age. This is not to undermine the ability of the capital to move ahead, owing to an in-built dynamic social and production relation. But the fact remains that the gross exploitation and appropriation continues at a massive pace. The new age globalisation can be described as a high degree of integration of world production, markets, finances, culture and politics at the expense of the local or national.³⁷ This seems to be a highly reductionist approach – that everything in the present stage has been said and explained by Marx. This is a highly anti-Marxist position. Marxism is a growing science; a project with a revolutionary, transformative tone. Sivanandan argues that Marx himself would require us to re-examine Marxism in the context of massive changes of our times. But, in the final analysis, the Marxist method of analysis always remains.³⁸

The relation of production between capital and labour has changed so fundamentally that labour has lost a great deal of its economic and political clout. And along with this, the technological innovation and the subsequent downsizing of the labour forces, gives the capital an awesome power that it seldom enjoyed since primitive accumulation. The omnipotent onslaught of the capital on every aspect of human association – social, political, cultural, economic and ideological aspects –

³⁷ Jim Davis, "Rethinking Globalisation", Race and Class (London), Vol.40, No.2/3, 1998-99, p.37.

³⁸ A. Sivanandan, "Globalisation and the Left", Race and Class (London), Vol.40, No.2/3, 1998, p.7.

leave the left-minded people in a fix. The multinational corporations are having their say in every aspect of international political economy. The third world states, which were once the abode of self-reliance and nationalist policies, are in no position to counter the advancement of the global capital. Instead, the third world states are highly entrenched in the maneuvers of international capital,— in the process loosing their sovereignty. Sivanandan rightly echoes the situation, “The point is that businesses are in the business of government and governments are in the business of businesses and, together, they are killing off whole population.”³⁹

The world capitalist system’s origin goes back to the 16th century with the historic, singular transformation from feudalism to capitalism. Capitalism as a system gives formacy to accumulation. In capitalist mode of production, everything is meant for profit realisation and, accumulation becomes and remains dominant. Thus, historically, capitalist social relations of production stand apart. The new age globalisation is a result of structural changes in capitalism, in the actions of many people, corporate bodies, and states, that cumulatively produce new relationships and patterns of behavior.⁴⁰

It is no exaggeration to state that the roots of the present state of affairs in the third world could be traced back to the colonial era and further economic activities were built upon this dependent and uneven structure, which demands an inflow of

³⁹ Ibid., p.9.

⁴⁰ Robert Cox, “Global Perestroika”, Socialist Register (London), 1992, p.26.

capital from the centre to the periphery.⁴¹ And during this colonial period, the international monetary relations were heavily biased against the periphery. The inter-war period saw the emergence of the United States as the leaders of world capitalism and the immediate post-war period saw the U.S. emerging as a super power and, assigning itself the role of championing the cause of the liberal capitalism. The Bretton Woods system attempted to strike a balance between a liberal world market and the domestic responsibilities of states. An international economic order was in place to oversee the capitalist system.

Keynesian demand management, moderate inflation as well as war and arms production placed a key role in sustaining growth and subsequently the system.⁴² Thus, “a new colonialism emerged with its centre of gravity in the United States of America; a new economic order was being fashioned at Bretton Woods. Capital, labour, trade were to be unshackled of their past inhibitions – and the world opened up to accumulation on a scale more massive than ever before. The instruments of that expansion – the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank were ready to go into operation.”⁴³

⁴¹ Arthur MacEwan, “The Current Crisis in Latin America and the International Economy”, Monthly Review (New York), Vol.36, No.9, 1985, p.3.

⁴² R. Cox, no.40, p.27.

⁴³ A. Sivanandan, “Imperialism in the Silicon Age”, Monthly Review (New York), Vol.32, No.3, 1980, p.24.

As a complementary factor, one could see the decolonisation under this neo-colonial arrangement in which the 'links' between the metropolitan country and the colony were not broken. The post-war 'transfer of power' saw the continuance of the previous order through legal means. Import-substitution and, later, export promotion were the order of the day and intense capital and technology transfer took place from the core to the periphery. Aid was institutionalized towards the interest of the capital. Robert McNamara, as the new president of the World Bank rightly pointed out, "...very little of the money lent in aid stays in the developing countries. Almost all of its returns quickly in payment for the goods purchased in the richer countries. It is our job in the World Bank to look at the world money markets as a whole and where there are surpluses and reserves that can be tapped."⁴⁴ The logic is quite clear, aid was given to the developing nations to finance the imports from the developed nations and thus to keep the capitalist windmill running.

Export promotions created more debt and, in turn more dependency. This situation was worsened by the two oil shocks; the deteriorating terms of trade; high volatility and increase in interest rates of loans and the growing protectionism in the North. The glut of petrodollars was recycled and this made the debt situation of the third world more precarious. Cheryl Payer compares the debt situation with that of bonded labour.⁴⁵ Payer's argument goes like this; the aim of the employer/creditor is

⁴⁴ Quoted in C.P. Bhambhri, World Bank and India (New York: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), p.9.

⁴⁵ Cheryl Payer, The Debt Trap, The IMF and the Third World (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p.49.

neither to collect the debt once and for all, nor to starve the employee to death, but to keep the labourer so for ever. The worker cannot run away, for the state recognizes the legality of the debt; nor has he any hope of gaining freedom from his low earning. So the vicious circle is complete. Payer extends this to the international situation. The early 1980s saw the breakout of the inevitable debt crisis and subsequently the massive effort by the capital to manage it.

From the early 1970s onwards the international capitalist system was facing a recession – the inevitable crisis in the process of accumulation. But the West held a different position, “the economic problems of 1970s were directly due to the past pursuit of policies of high aggregate demand, full employment, high rates of taxation, generous social welfare benefits and growing state intervention.”⁴⁶ The remedial measures went to the other extreme of tight monetarism, promotion of market forces and the curbing of the role of the state. This situation was used to furnish a theoretical support for liberalism. “A combination of monetary, neo-classical and supply side theorists furnished the intellectual support for the position that the material prosperity of the industrial countries and the rapid economic progress of the East Asian countries were the result of their reliance on market forces. In contrast, they held, the poorer economic performance of the communist countries and much of

⁴⁶ Dharam Ghai, “Structural Adjustment, Global Integration and Social Democracy” in Prendorgart Renee and Stewart Frances (eds.), Market Forces and World Development (New York, 1994), p.17.

third world resulted primarily from extensive state intervention in the management of the economy.”⁴⁷

Thus the theoretical base was set to suit the interest of the capital. The neo-liberal agenda found articulate spokespersons such as Thatcher and Reagan and their message came to be known as the “Washington Consensus”. The agenda of the international institutions was to replace all development theories with the Chicago school monetarism. The structural adjustment and stabilization programme went hand in hand with the globalisation process. “Structural adjustment and global integration are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. While the process of globalisation gave birth to structural adjustment as a response to world economic crisis, the adoption of reform measures have in turn widened and deepened the thrust towards global integration.”⁴⁸

Globalisation in the 1990s is made possible by the technological advancement, with the major role being played by the finance capital and the globalisation of production. Finance has been decoupled from production and has become an independent power over the real economy. Global production has transcended national barriers and is in a position to make use of the territorial divisions of the international economy. The technological revolution has changed the nature of the organization of the capital.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.18-19.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.26.

The 1990s have seen the massive increase in trade and capital flows and stock markets are booming around the world. This massive growth in the finance capital along with the technological revolution has changed the nature of capitalism. As A. Sivanandan observed: "the qualitative changes brought about at the level of the forces of production have brought about changes in the mode of production which, in turn, have led to changes in social relations. If 'the handmill gives you society with the feudal lord and the steam-mill gives you society with the industrial capitalist', the microchip gives you society with the global capitalist."⁴⁹

Just as the industrial technology directed money away from the land to the factories, information technology has propelled investment away from manufacturing into global speculation. The biggest financial market is the exchange of foreign currency, the simple buying and selling of money exchange transactions are sixty times larger than world trade in manufactured goods, with some 1.3 billion dollars a day rocketing through electronic space. Along with this is the growth of the stock market. The market never closes. The 13 trillion dollars listed in integrated markets circulate the globe in seconds. The information technology has so transformed the nature of international financial system that it becomes impossible to describe the rapid changes with the present vocabulary. "The new global bourgeoisie represents two basic economic sectors, finance and the digital economy. The digital economy

⁴⁹ Quoted in Jerry Harris, "Globalisation and the Technological Transformation of Capitalism", *Race and Class*, Vol.40, No.2/3, 1998-99, p.21.

lies in computers, telecommunications, media, phone and the cable industries, and consists of those corporations taking the lead in conceiving, developing and producing the new tools of production and those building its infrastructure.”⁵⁰

Globalisation has trapped the third world in an intricate web of economic relationships. The decolonisation movement, which sought to develop independent national economies through import substitution and South - South trade ties, ended in situation of debt crisis and dependency. The new era of global hegemony has been achieved through the huge influx of volatile money, the flexibility of production and the rules and norms that gives the North an advantage. The key to the new system is its flexibility, mobility and speed rather than its territorial control, stability and dedicated exploitation of any one particular people.

Information technology holds out greater possibility towards greater democracy and participation through the access to information and knowledge. It can develop environmentally safe model of production and hence can have an equitable and just order.

But the question is of a political will.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.28.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Antonio Gramsci's writings has been rooted in the main currents of intellectual, social, political and cultural history of Italy. Further, it is also a product of his association with the international communist movement of his time. Even though, some attribute "nationalistic" tendencies to his writings, of late, attempts are made to extrapolate his ideas to an international scenario. Gramsci's overarching concepts like hegemony and civil society were successfully employed by Robert Cox, Stephen Gill and others in explaining the U.S. hegemony in the post-World War II period. The same concepts were employed to explain *pax britannica* also.

Gramsci, who wrote within the Marxist framework, went beyond the framework through profound innovations. Gramsci, the theoretician of the superstructure, gave primacy to the superstructure over the structure, but still remaining firm with the decisive economic movement. And within the superstructural level, he prioritised civil society over the political society or state. Gramsci, through the extended notion of state and civil society, has developed the concept of hegemony to explain class domination in a society. He used several concepts – often alleged of ambiguity – to explain the bourgeois order and to delineate a possible, radical alternative.

In Gramsci's schema, structure and the superstructure have a dynamic relationship. The structure and superstructure are looked through an element of class politics. This dynamic and harmonious relationship exists in so far as the superstructure contains organizations that guarantee the development of the structure in its present form. In this moment of unity, class is organically linked to the superstructure through intellectuals and party. There exists several superstructural levels. Through the class politics exercised by the intellectuals and the party, a national-popular collective will is created. And further, a hegemonic bloc is created under the supremacy of the working class in its effort towards a socialist transformation. This hegemonic moment is attained over the terrain of civil society through political, social and cultural hegemony. This hegemonic moment is preceded by the formation of the historical bloc – an alliance of forces that exercises hegemony over the society. This moment of historical bloc, coupled with the economic structure, is the cultural unity of the structure and superstructure.

In this expansive hegemony, the working class becomes the national class. And this dynamic unity of structure and superstructure becomes the momentum to the forward march of history. In the final analysis, this entire new relationship becomes necessary by the development of the forces of production. This moment resembles the Marxian notion of a classless and stateless society.

Having briefly delineated the Gramscian model, let us briefly discuss the flaws in the model. However, an extensive critique is not contemplated here. Perry

Anderson (1976) has done an extensive criticism on Western Marxism. Anderson (1977) has also carried out an extensive criticism on Gramsci. The first and foremost point that is raised against Gramsci is the ambiguous nature of his writings. Even though the prison conditions and fascist censorship is in position, for academic purposes the ambiguities are also to be considered.

Anderson views that Gramsci failed to adequately characterise the relationship between capitalist society and the ideological generation of consent. He feels that Gramsci was inconsistent in his approach in explaining the dichotomies of state/civil society and coercion/consent. He argues that Gramsci is inconsistent in placing the site of consent in the capitalist society. Gramsci, rightly, attributes the coercive and consensual functions to the state, but also attributes, falsely, the same to the civil society too. Further, Anderson feels that, Gramsci's use of hegemony tends to accredit the notion that "culture" is also a dominant mode. Anderson argues that the dichotomy of force/consent is already implicit in a capitalist society and it is always the threat of force that dominates. Further, ideological or consensual nature of bourgeois rule is not to be detected in civil society, but rather in the formation of the state. Anderson and others share a structural account of capitalism. To them, Gramsci's analysis, regarding the structure of capitalism and the location of ideology within that structure, is untenable.

The Marxist critics of Gramsci tend to follow what Bobbio (1979) argued: that Gramsci gave historical primacy to the superstructures – in particular civil society –

in a class based society. This reading gives his critics room for an alternative structural schema of legitimisation of capitalist societies through consent that emanates from the separation of economics and politics. But, the fact remains that Prison Notebooks is an attempt to delineate a revolutionary transformative project and not intended in constructing a sociology of consent.

Defending Gramsci, James Martin (1998) says that Gramsci's attention to the crisis of the bourgeoisie emanates from the efficacy of the proletarian hegemony. The bourgeois exercise of hegemony is a variable and not a given condition of political domination. Hence Anderson's attempt to criticize Gramsci from a position of orthodoxy is misplaced from the beginning. The Anglo-American reading of Gramsci does not duly consider the Italian conditions under which Gramsci matured as a political theorist. Gramsci's concept of state incorporated a recognition of authority as an emergent property, one yet to be fully achieved. Consequently political society (the coercive apparatus of the state) still requires a civil society to consolidate its legitimacy.

According to Gramsci, world orders are grounded in social orders. A significant structural change in the world order is likely to be traceable to some fundamental changes in the national structures of social relations. Gramsci feels that this would come about with the emergence of a new historical bloc. Thus the national content remains the site of creation of a new international historic bloc. A continuous and sustained struggle or war of position is essential for a socialist transformation.

The globalisation process, which fails to accommodate the interests of the broader majority, open up the prospects of broader alliances of the disadvantaged sections against capital. The in built crisis of the capitalist order and the revolutionary potential of the human beings remain a hope. As Gramsci says, "I believe that when all is lost or seems to be, you have to go back to work, starting from scratch with a cheerful outlook."

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