

Conceptions of Hegemony in Antonio Gramsci's Southern Question and the *Prison Notebooks*

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ABSTRACT. The article focuses on Antonio Gramsci's Southern Question and the *Prison Notebooks* and tries to demonstrate that he just re-theorises the formative stages of class power beginning from economic relations to political power, in other words, ruling class power developing from civil hegemony into political hegemony along the lines of classical Marxist texts. For Gramsci, hegemony does not only refer to ideological and cultural leadership of the ruling groups and classes over the allies, but also, domination by them of even the allies. Hegemony refers not only to consent to be obtained from ruled ones, but also force, coercion and imposition of ruling class interests over those of allies or rival groups and classes. The article also implies that Gramsci tries to put an end the dichotomies between force and consent, the base and superstructure, and also between hegemony and domination. Lastly, article points to the fact that Gramsci tries to spatialize Marxist theory, as clearly seen in his metaphors such as ideological, intellectual, agrarian blocks and his conception of sub-systems of social relations such as agrarian block and intellectual block.

Key words: hegemony, state, civil society, revolution

Introduction

In this article I deal with the conceptions of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci with regard to his formulations about the state, civil society, and socialist strategy. For this purpose, I focus on his article "The Southern Question" and the *Prison Notebooks*.

Antonio Gramsci's intellectual and political life can be divided into two periods: the pre-prison years and his years in prison. His pre-prison life, before 1926, can be seen as a political apprenticeship (Bellamy and Schecter 1993). He was a socialist journalist and a member of the Italian Socialist Party (ISP). His period at Turin University, in the Department of Literature, ensured that he knew Italian intellectuals, such as idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce. Between 1915 and 1916 he was a contributor to the Socialist Party's daily news-

paper *Avanti* and the Turin Socialist Party's local weekly *II Grido del Popolo*. His socialist experience first developed during this period; he was a Sardinian nationalist, an ISP activist and a trade union official. In 1919 Gramsci helped found *L'Ordine Nuovo*, a weekly of socialist theory and culture.

The period between 1918 and 1920 was the summit of trade unionism, the factory council movement and militancy in Italy. Such mobilisation of workers' democracy soon declined and accordingly, an inner conflict within the socialist party arose. Factory occupations and strikes were not supported by the party, while the Socialist union organisation rejected the occupations.

Gramsci suggested that communist groups be organised in factories and he rejected the autonomous positions of the councils in the face of unions

and party. He advocated the liquidation of reformist tendencies within the party in accordance with the Twenty One Points of the Communist International. There emerged a communist faction under the leadership of Amadeo Bordiga in the Livorno Congress of the party in 1921. The Italian Communist Party was established in this period, with Bordiga as secretary general and Gramsci a member of the executive committee.

In 1921, the Communist International launched its “united front” policy against fascism and suggested a collaboration of socialists and communists, but the new Italian Communist Party rejected a united front strategy and in March 1922 criticised it at its Rome Congress. Despite the recommendation of the Communist International, a fusion of socialists and communists could not be established. Gramsci and Bordiga reject the Communist International’s strategy and Bordiga appointed a new executive committee for the party. That same year the Fascists under Mussolini seized political power in Italy.

In 1923, Gramsci first became concerned with a revolutionary alliance between the workers of the industrial north, and the peasants of the agricultural south. By then he was secretary general of the party, responsible for the party’s cell organisations and advocating its Bolshevisation. He was also a member of the national parliament. A year later in the Lyon Congress, a majority was established against Bordiga’s faction.

Gramsci and other communist deputies were arrested on November 8, 1926, and sentenced to 20 years in prison. It was then that he began to write his *Prison Notebooks*. His manuscripts written in prison between 1929 and 1937 are wide-ranging works about Italian history, politics, intellectuals, philosophy, literature and cultural problems. They were published after the World War II as the *Prison Notebooks*.

The fact that Antonio Gramsci’s life began in Sardinia, a backward agrarian and conservative region, seems to have formed a background essential to understanding the social and spatial aspects of the political processes with regard to the class alliances, hegemonic subordination of the backward regions to more developed ones, and the role of intellectuals in the organisation of hegemony.

Hegemony as Political Alliance of Classes

“Some Aspects of the Southern Question” (Gramsci 1994) is one of Gramsci’s articles that exposed his ideas systematically and defined a horizon through which political, historical and cultural questions in the *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci 1986) can be seen. I suggest that “The Southern Question” and the *Prison Notebooks* present a similarity in terms of problematics and problems which Gramsci deals with. The former is a draft article written in 1926 before he entered prison, yet it presents the main themes of the *Prison Notebooks* and, it can be suggested, that he would just follow and extend the themes that he first considered there (Fior 1990). These themes include class alliances, intellectuals, historical and agrarian blocks, and the role of intellectuals in politics.

“Some Aspects of the Southern Question” recalled the views of Turin communists in the early 1920s about possible political alliances between the Northern workers and the Southern peasants in the revolutionary struggle:

The Turin communists had raised, in concrete terms, the question of the “hegemony of the proletariat”: in other words, the question of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers’ State. For the proletariat to become the ruling, the dominant class, it must succeed in creating a system of class alliances which allow it to mobilise the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State. [Gramsci 1994:316]

In the case of the proletariat, hegemony was seen as a social base of the proletarian dictatorship requiring class alliance. Such an alliance meant “succeeding in obtaining the consent of the broad peasant masses.” This was not something new; any alliance needs to obtain “consent.” The peasant question implied, for Italian history, “the southern question” and the Vatican question rather than the agrarian question only. If so, for the proletariat to be able to obtain the consent of the vast majority of the peasants to its hegemony, it had to deal with this question (Gramsci 1994:316). Here, Gramsci began to be concerned with the alliance with the peasantry regarding the “southern question,” and, for this purpose, he had to deal with characteristics of the Southern peasantry.

For an alliance to work, he stated, some concessions had to be made: “the proletariat, if it is to govern as a class, must throw off all traces of corporatism and all syndicalism prejudices and incrustations” in order to obtain the support of the peasants and certain groups of the “urban semi-proletarians” (Gramsci 1994:321). Workers as a class must “lead the peasant and intellectuals.” If these strata were not won over to the socialist project, the workers could not be the leader, and these strata would remain a part of the bourgeoisie (Gramsci 1994:322). It is seen that the workers also would have to lead the intellectuals. It is sure that the workers could lead the intellectuals only when the organisations of the workers attracted the intellectuals. The workers’ hegemony was their capability of leading and gaining the support of peasants, semi-proletarians and intellectuals. A division among these different groups and classes was assumed, observed and preserved.

As for the class alliances of the bourgeoisie, Gramsci observed that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the bourgeoisie had two choices. It could either implement a kind of “rural democracy,” which implied free trade, administrative decentralisation, and falling agricultural input prices at the expense of the workers, or it could choose an “industrial democracy” through the consent of the industrial workers, offering them high wages, unionist liberties and a centralised state (as an expression of the bourgeois domination over the peasants in the South and islands) with tariff protections. The second alternative was in fact set in motion by Prime Minister Giolitti through the agency of the Socialist party (Gramsci 1994:323). Here, we need to pay attention to the fact that hegemony was the problem of the bourgeoisie as the dominant class in contrast to the search for hegemony by the proletariat.

However, between 1900 and 1910, a kind of syndicalism emerged which immediately reacted against the reformist block that had been established between the bourgeoisie and the workers in favour of creating a block with the Southern peasants. The ideological essence of this unionism was another type of reformism according to Gramsci. Its intellectual nucleus came from Southernism and leaned towards the sides of the bourgeoisie via nationalism. In addi-

tion, the Nationalist Party was established by the old cadres of this kind of union renewal. It seemed that the “capitalist-worker industrial block” created a rural democratic reaction in favour of “Southernist neo-liberalism” (Gramsci 1994:323-4). Here, a kind of unionism opposed the block of bourgeoisie-workers and suggested a block of workers-peasants under the ideological leadership of the South’s nationalist intellectuals.

There were two kinds of democracy and alliances of the bourgeoisie: the industrial democracy of the bourgeois-proletarian alliance, and the rural democracy of the bourgeois-peasant-landowner alliance. These various alliances among the classes pointed to temporary and short-term tactics and relationships between modern group interests. However, rising mobilisation of the peasants would put forward a new alliance: a proletarian-peasant workers alliance against the bourgeois-peasant alliance.

After 1910, the Socialist Party rejected the industrial block as defined by Giolitti when the peasant workers’ mobilisation began in the Po Valley and when Giolitti built a class alliance between the bourgeoisie and the peasants of North and Central Italy through the agency of the Catholics (Gramsci 1994:324). And during the war and post war period, an industrial bourgeoisie-Southern landowner alliance was put into motion under the leadership of Salandra and Nitti, the “Southern heads of government” (Gramsci 1994:324-5).

Corporatism as a New Class Alliance

After the bourgeois-landowner alliance, we see a new class alliance in the form of “corporatism” which depended on the negotiation of organised rival classes under the referee of the state. As for its Italian form, in the time of workers’ and people’s mobilisations in the North taking place after 1919, Giolitti was again in power, trying to implement the plan of “corporate reformism” with the aid of the General Confederation of Labour. Gramsci argued that “he now believes he can bring the workers into the framework of the bourgeois state system” (Gramsci 1994:325). This plan would be realised by the involvement of the workers through co-operative management of the Fiat Company. In the other

part of the system, working class deputies helped the integration of the workers into the political system through political parties. But the plan was rejected by the workers in accordance with the agitation of the Turin communists. If it were implemented, said Gramsci, the working class would lose its autonomy and independence and then become an “appendage of the bourgeois State.” Here Gramsci rejected any alliance between the bourgeoisie, its state and the workers. Such an alliance would also prevent the possibility of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasants. One reason for this rejection was related to the preservation of its own independence and its ability of allying with peasants and other sectors of workers. Actually Gramsci pointed to the possible leadership of the proletariat in the future.

Moreover, poor workers would see the co-operative workers as privileged and peasants would see them as exploiters and the main cause of their poverty. Gramsci argued that the rejection of the plan demonstrated the maturity of the Turin workers. In the areas outside Turin such as Reggio Emilia, there was a powerful reformism and class corporatism. This corporatism provoked hate against the Northern workers and was widespread among the Southerners (Gramsci 1994:326). A corporatist plan should also have been presented to the Emilia workers, said Gramsci. However, after a Turin communist informed the workers about the North-South relations, these workers rejected corporatism. This situation revealed for Gramsci the fact that “reformism did not represent the true spirit of workers of Reggio” (Gramsci 1994:327).

The Idea of Block: Social and Ideological

Up to this point, it is indeed impossible to see that Gramsci’s analyses were outside of the so-called traditional Marxism. However, at this juncture in the draft article, Gramsci went back to Southern society. He defined the South “as an arena of extreme social disintegration” while observing that “southern society is a great agrarian block.”¹ This block consisted of

a “scattered mass of the peasantry; the intellectuals of the lower and middle strata of the rural bourgeoisie; and the great landowners and major intellectuals” (Gramsci 1994:327). It is sure that this block was envisaged as an obstruction for class penetration of the socialist proletariat. The big landowners making politics and the major intellectuals forming ideology formed the leading and centralising elements of the block and “it is in the ideological field that this centralisation is at its most precise and efficacious” (Gramsci 1994:328). The major intellectuals, Guistino Fortunato and Benedetto Croce, were the central figures of the Southern system and hence, of the “Italian reaction.” Their mentality and positions within the state bureaucracy made them a significant stratum in terms of Italian national life. Here, Gramsci pointed to the backward, agrarian conditions of Italy. In countries such as Italy where agriculture was significant, “the old model of intellectual was the organizing element” and under this model intellectuals “provide the bulk of the State personnel and locally, too, in the villages and the little country towns, [the old model] plays the part of intermediary between the peasant and the administration in general” (Gramsci 1994:328). This phenomenon was typical in Southern Italy. Intellectuals were “democratic” in front of the peasants and reactionary in front of the great landowners and the government. The Southern political parties and these social strata were closely related. The Southern intellectuals, Gramsci observed, originated from the rural bourgeoisie, which was still powerful there. They were often rentiers, and given their class background, hated the working peasants. As well, Gramsci characterised the Southern clergy as part of the intellectual group. The priest, in the eyes of the peasants, was a usurer and a bailiff, an ordinary man with all the “usual passions” of women and money. The peasant “has little time for the clergy” in the South (Gramsci 1994:329).

The intellectuals provided a link between peasants and administration and between the peasants and landowners. Any peasant mobilisation was not

1 The dictionary meaning of “block” explains many things about what Gramsci means by the term “block.” It is 1) any large, solid piece of wood, stone, metal, etc... 5)an obstruction or hindrance... 8) a group of buildings,

11) any number of things regarded as a unit (Concise Edition, *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 1957, the World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York)

independent, but absorbed by local party processes organised by the intellectuals and controlled by great landowners and “their agents.” This sort of link was dominant in the mainland South and Sicily where “a monstrous agrarian block” existed. This block, said Gramsci, “functions as an intermediary and overseer for Northern capitalism and the great banks” (Gramsci 1994:331). It preserved “the status quo” despite the thoughts of some bourgeois thinkers such as Sidney Sonnino and Leopoldo Franchetti, who put the Southern question into the national agenda by suggesting a middle stratum in the South (Gramsci 1994:331) after they had been panicked by the rebellious poor peasants. But, the project of creating a middle class there was impossible because of the dominant economic relations between the North and the South (Gramsci 1994:332-3). Here I can suggest that for a possibility of socialist politics to be realised in the countryside as described above, existence of a modern political party organisation could be seen as a starting point. But here Gramsci did not go beyond this point in his analyses. Nevertheless, he points to the cracks which are seen among peasants and among intellectuals. Exploitation of these ‘cracks’ and the existence of modern party organization in the countryside seemed to be the only possibilities for socialist proletarian politics.

The agrarian block was kept together thanks to an intellectual block which “prevented the cracks... from becoming too dangerous.” But extreme social disintegration in Southern Italy was occurring both for the peasants and the intellectuals. Giustino Fortunato and Benedetto Croce were “the exponents of this intellectual block” and were considered “as the most active reactionaries of the entire peninsula.” The South, observed Gramsci, had “academics and cultural bodies of the greatest erudition” (Gramsci 1994:333). Although there was no organisation of culture at the lower level, there was nevertheless an accumulation of intelligence and culture in the hands of a small group of major intellectuals as long as the Southernism could be influential in central and northern Italy. This influence was inspired and moderated by the intellectual and political thinking of Fortunato and Croce. Their function was to prevent radical approaches to turn into revolutionary fervour and moderate rad-

ical thinking (Gramsci 1994:333-4). Croce was a Southerner who reached out to European culture. This satisfied the intellectual needs of the educated young people. He provided for them a *reformation* in thought for religious ideas and a possibility of participating in national and European culture. He could therefore detach the radical youth from peasantry and masses. Thus, he won the intellectuals as such simultaneously to the national interests and to the agrarian block (Gramsci 1994:334). The fact that the rural block had bourgeois liberal conservative intellectuals prevented the formation of revolutionary leadership by blocking the penetration of revolutionary ideology into young intellectuals. A modern, charismatic (and here conservative) intellectual could solve all mental contradictions in the mind of a young intellectual. He could show them the path of respect and status. I suggest that the idea of “false consciousness” seems to have been reformed with the idea of blocking revolutionary ideas into certain social and spatial blocks thanks to the intellectual leadership of the intellectual block. The division between “false” and “true” was replaced with a division between “blocked” and “open” spheres for any revolution ideologies to penetrate.

Nevertheless, “the cracks in the agrarian block” were possible. Gramsci argued that although the socialist circles around *L'Ordine Nuovo* and Turin communists could be related with such an intellectual formation, they managed to create a new development by identifying the urban proletariat as the national vanguard of Italian history and the South at the same time. They changed the left-wing intellectuals and became an intermediary between radical intellectuals and the proletariat. The outstanding figure in this process was Pietro Gobetti (Gramsci 1994:334). Gramsci observed that Gobetti connected the communists to “those intellectuals raised on the terrain of capitalist technique who adopted a left position, favourable to the dictatorship of the proletariat, in 1919-20” and to “a series of Southern intellectuals who ... approached the Southern question in a different way from the traditional one, introducing the Northern proletariat into the equation” (Gramsci 1994:336).

The question of intellectuals was the key problem for the class alliance formation and hence for a

revolutionary strategy. I suggest that Gramsci saw the intellectuals as a social group who formed the intellectual and ideological blocks or intellectual and ideological cohesive forces of social-spatial blocks. Suggestion is clear: breaks should be opened and cracks should be widened and exploited by the left.

The proletariat, as a class, is short of organising elements; it does not have its own layer of intellectuals and it will only be able to form such a stratum, very slowly and laboriously, after the conquest of State power. But it is also important and useful that a break should take place within the mass of intellectuals: a break of an organic nature, historically characterised. It is important that there should be formed, as a mass formation, a left tendency in the modern sense—that is a tendency oriented towards the revolutionary proletariat. [Gramsci 1994:336]

Gramsci did not simply point to isolated ideological struggle, but intellectual breaks had to be realised through party and blocks (here agrarian) had to be destroyed. These kinds of intellectual breaks and a new formation were required for the class alliance between workers and the peasants of the South. This could be realised through the proletarian party by destructing the agrarian block by the proletariat. However, such a job could be done only when the intellectual block, which is “flexible and extremely resistant” of the agrarian block could be split apart (Gramsci 1994:337).

A rival intellectual block can be divided within itself, and some of its parts, Gramsci seems to say, can be made a part of the revolution. We must recall that the class sources of socialist intellectuals were already bourgeois in general. But their transformation to socialism can be realised mainly through class struggle. Gramsci seems to suggest an artificial attempt to win the still alien intellectuals to the movement. However, he seems to ignore the fact that intellectuals coming from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class backgrounds influence ideological characteristic of the socialist and communist parties of the working classes. These elements probably bring with themselves their class ideas into the movement if they cannot completely adopt the ideology of the working class. Both Marx and Lenin pointed out

that the ideological purity of the working class parties, just like their political independence, had to be maintained and preserved.

Until now, I have tried to demonstrate that Gramsci’s main problematic was the class alliance formation between the proletariat and peasants, between two national and revolutionary classes. Although the metaphor of “block” presents a way of seeing “false consciousness” as consciousness which has not been influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the working class yet, there still seems to be no alternative to the idea that class consciousness could be inserted from without as suggested by Lenin’s *What is to Be Done?* (1998). Sociological sub-systems or structures as “blocks” prevent penetration of the “alien” forces into inner textures, and articulate sub-systems into the centres. In addition, the metaphor of “block” points to the fact that the units and elements of the existing political and ideological system clarify the abstract debates over classes and ideologies and direct us to the analyses of concrete socio-spatial networks and concentrations. All the debates above can be reduced to this formulation: although “hegemony” has been used in the meaning of political and ideological leadership of a group or a class and, although there has still not been any significant novelty in Gramsci’s definition of blocks, the seeming novelty is the suggestion that a reactionary intellectual block that controls the outmoded social blocks can be isolated from each other while the proletarian party is destroying the latter (here agrarian) block. Furthermore, Gramsci’s metaphors such as blocks and his conception of social relations in the form of socio-spatial units and networks shows that Gramsci also attempts to spatialise Marxist social and political analysis (about this problem, see Gündoğan 1996 and also my attempts using the same insights, Gündoğan 2005). This insight is one of the characteristic aspects of his conceptions of hegemony.

Hegemony and Revolution: From the Permanent Revolution to Civil Hegemony

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci opens his political analyses with the bourgeois revolution of Italy, which occurs in the second half of the 19th century. The Risorgimento covers a period that ended

with the unification of Italy. In the analyses of the period, he seeks to reveal the hegemonic formation of the bourgeois domination. At the outset, he suggests that the supremacy of a social group implies both a *domination* and *force* over rival groups besides intellectual and moral direction of the allied groups. The supremacy is first realised, or won over to, in intellectual and moral direction (Gramsci 1986:14-5). A dominant social group forms an *ideological block* in a forward way. The block as such is influential over the left wing of the Risorgimento. The Action Party was different only in terms of gestures. “The Left” became “the Right” in the sense of politics and intellectual thinking. Croce and Fortunato formed an *intellectual block* in the South and hence in the nation, in favour of pan-Italy policies. The *national block* was established with the alliance of the Action Party by the Reformists (Gradualists) after 1848 (Gramsci 1986:36). As can be seen, Gramsci introduced many *blocks*: the *ideological block*, *intellectual block* and *national block*. “Blocks” seem to be concrete and solid (like a “block” that is a mixture of cement, steel and water) relations. It is logical that any radical opposition breaks down the blocks.

The Risorgimento lacked *Jacobinism*. Previously in France, Jacobinism could establish a political-military power during revolution and could employ an agricultural policy in favour of the peasants. The Jacobins of France were successful in the integration of the cities with the countryside. They imposed themselves as a ruling party to the bourgeoisie. They integrated the masses to the rulers, rural France to Paris (Gramsci 1986:40-2). The more interesting point is to see the Jacobin experience as a product of the period in which society was gelatinous and did not have mass parties, mass organisations like syndicates, and in which the state was relatively weak while civil society had considerable autonomy from the state. This autonomy was also valid for the national economies. The period between 1789 and 1848 in France and the rest of Europe entailed “permanent revolution.” With the beginning of colonialism, revolutionary ferment changed as the organisation of the state became complicated and concentrated at home and abroad. Therefore, the “permanent revolution” which was valid before 1848 was replaced by

civil hegemony, and the war of manoeuvre by the war of positions. The victories were prepared during peaceful times. The modern democracies, thanks to their state organisations and civil life, resulted in the totality of organisms (institutions, associations, etc.). This fact implied “the war of positions” and the permanent fortification of the front in the political sphere (Gramsci 1986:174).

Here, Gramsci presents a wide area of socialist politics during peaceful times. He seems to say that revolution is or has to be realised before the seizure of state power or before the final crisis of the bourgeois system breaks out. It is clear that when Gramsci refers to the development of the bourgeois revolutions, he points to the bourgeois revolutionary *period*. However, the problem is whether he is concerned with either the post-1848 period of the workers or that of the bourgeoisie. It can be suggested that the idea of permanent revolution has different connotations for the bourgeoisie and the socialists. In 1848 and after, the bourgeoisie had to maintain its own revolution and oppress the socialist revolutionary struggle simultaneously. Not only the dominant classes, but also the dominated working classes began to change their respective revolutionary strategies. A change in one side required a change on the other side. The working classes began to develop their own autonomous socialist politics. On the part of the workers, Marx began to shift the emphasis from democracy to socialism, from civil society to the critical analysis of the economics of the class struggle, that is, all criticisms of political economy which would culminate in *Capital*.

And another thing to be noted is that Gramsci sees civil society as more autonomous than the state before 1848 and the state as more simple. The strategy of permanent revolution also reached a limit in this time and was to be replaced with civil hegemony. We do not see any analysis of the classes, class struggles and the relative power positions of fighting classes. The 1848 revolutions are turning points in terms of emerging independent politics of the working class and of socialist revolutions. In the 1848 of France, the working class attempted its own revolution and was defeated. The 1848 revolutions are also a turning point for the relationship between democracy

and socialism. The struggle would be no longer only for democracy but for socialism beyond democracy. The proof of this change would be seen in the events that led to the establishment of the Paris Commune, which was seen by Marx and Engels, in their *Civil War in France*, as the first example of proletarian revolution and the state.

Hegemony and Identical Relationship between Civil Society and the State

Gramsci argues that there are connections among liberalism, theoretical syndicalism as an appearance of economism, and English political economy. The idea of *laissez-faire* represents civil society—the state dichotomy as a reality rather than a methodological division—and tries to legitimise the policy the state should not intervene into the economy, which belongs to the civil society. (Here Gramsci seems to accept that the dichotomy can be made for methodological purposes). However, *laissez-faire* as a political program depends on the force of law. *Actually*, civil society and the state are identical (Gramsci 1986:100-3), although they can be methodologically divided.

In such a relationship, hegemony is imposed by the ruling group. It requires the transcendence of economic-corporate interests of the ruling group and has to assume the interests and tendencies of the allied elements. Hegemony is not only an ethic-politic phenomenon, but also an economic one. Its foundations underlie the function of a ruling group in key areas of the economy. Economy is the secret reason of history in the last analysis. Economic conflict is projected into the consciousness of ideologies (Gramsci 1986:104-6). Here Gramsci seems to locate himself in the line of traditional Marxist dialectics. Hegemony is described as a leadership or domination that is imposed. Hegemony is not only political (and ideological) but also economical. However, hegemony requires the transcendence of narrow factional interests. Economic interests reflect into ideological consciousness. Hence it seems that we have different states of hegemony beginning first with articulation of narrow economic interests and then developing into ideological class consciousness.

How did Gramsci establish such an identical relationship between civil society and the state? He

directed our attention to the key economic function of the ruling group, which requires the consent of the groups under its hegemony. He also made clear that force is used against the rival groups, not against the allied groups (Gramsci 1986:119). Gramsci states that hegemony is imposed. So, it should not be thought that hegemony operates only through consent. Here it can be argued that he sees the identical relationship between civil society and the state as a manifestation or projection of civil society to the state power; in other words, as an elevation of the civil society to the state power: as an hegemony formed within and around the base of society to be elevated to the political hegemony of law, representation and force, etc. What Gramsci does is to follow these processes of elevation and projection of narrow interests into higher forms. The state becomes the projected form of civil society through hegemony formation within the base of society and the establishment of domination within the superstructure as a form of political power of the state. It can be added that, thanks to this manifestation or correspondence, *laissez-faire* ideology creates an impression that civil society-state dichotomy is a real one.

Gramsci's analyses of the moments of power relations obviously demonstrate that he follows generally accepted Marxist logic that the superstructure of social relations are constructed upon the economic base. In his conception of the state as regards civil society, it is necessary to look at how he constructs the formation of power relations as moments and stages (Gramsci 1986: 133-7):

1. A balance of the objective forces, which are countable and cannot be changed;
2. Political power relations, implying subjective self-consciousness, a level of organisation and homogeneity;
3. Military power relations, which are directly conclusive and decisive. Military power has two aspects, the level of pure technical quality and the level of political-military maturity.

I argue that these moments are imagined and represent methodologically the sequences in the historical formation of the bourgeois class power.²

² For analysis of historical forces, Gramsci recalls Marx's

Gramsci divided the formative process of (political) power relations, that is, the class power of the bourgeoisie, into three moments: In the first moment, trading and professional activities organise within themselves for narrow economic considerations. In the second moment, economic-corporate interests are elevated into a higher level in order to obtain an equality in political and legal statuses in relation to the other self-organised economic-corporate interests. At this moment, the state emerges as a question of organisation. The third and final moment represents a transition from the economic-corporate relations to the sphere of superstructure. Here, consciousness of the common interests of the allied and dependent groups takes the place of absolutely economic-corporate searches. What occurs is nothing but the fact that particular economic-corporate interests are imposed over society in more universalised forms. In this universalising, or hegemonisation process if we speak on Gramsci's behalf, *hegemony* of one group or a coalition is established over the dependent segments of society in regard not only to uniqueness and homogeneity of economic and political purposes but also to intellectual and moral coherence. This is the *pure political* moment. Universalising is to become the driving force of the national powers. The dominant group also fulfils the coordinating function for the dependent group interests. However, *hegemonic* formation makes the state affairs uncertain

passage in *Preface to a Contribution of the Critique of Political Economy*; in sum, Marx observes there: 1) historical agenda of men has to correspond to the possibilities and capabilities of the historical condition, and 2) a system does not end up unless it consumes all inner potentialities (Marx 1993:24). These two criteria are important in the sense that they imply the rejection of one sided extremities of both voluntarism and determinism for any Marxist analysis. In addition, they imply an organic and reciprocal relationship, which is something often forgotten in Marxist literature; between the base (economic base as a totality of the productive forces and relations of production) and superstructure (all kinds of political, legal, ideological, moral, aesthetic forms reciprocal to the base). What Gramsci means by "the organic" is nothing but the reciprocal and organic (actual reality) relationship. Indeed, the division between economy and politics, for example, is peculiar to the liberal theory, not to the Marxist theory.

in terms of the dominant and allied group interests. Nonetheless, says Gramsci, economic-corporate needs of the dominant group have priority over the others though they are not economic and corporate in the narrow sense anymore.

What Gramsci suggests by *hegemony* formation is nothing but the formation of class power of the bourgeoisie; in other words, the making of the bourgeois class. This process of formation follows the same moments that are described by Marx and Engels (1987) in the *German Ideology* in the context of the formation of the bourgeoisie.

Gramsci alerts us that in the actual reality of history, the moments of power formation interpenetrate and fuse into each other in the face of social and economic activities and regional differences. In addition, international relations affect national states (Gramsci 1986:133-6).

Political Hegemony

Three separate apparatuses of power (legislation, execution and jurisdiction), for Gramsci, form the organs of political hegemony (Gramsci 1986:176-7). It is clear that what he would later on mean by the *political society* were the organs of political hegemony. If a sense of justice, an efficient operation of public works, successful intervention of the state into economy and stable parliamentary arithmetic are maintained, political hegemony of the state has to be established. A narrow conception of the state sees the state only as the organs of political hegemony. However, Gramsci recalled Hegel's political theory by suggesting that political parties and associations are special organisms of the state. This conception immensely widened the scope of Gramsci's theory of the state. It is because the state, along its lines of political hegemony, must organise, mobilise, provide and educate the consent of the masses. The state has not only "political" or "public" organs but also "private" or civil organisms like the parties. Nearly everything belongs to the state. Here, it can be suggested that Gramsci is a theorist who is focussed on the state rather than on civil organisations. He extends the sociology of the state. The state rules and directs with and through organised consent. I think that the role of ideology has been widely utilised in Marxist theory; yet, the consensual domi-

nance as a dialectic of force and consent had not been formulated in this way till Gramsci. In addition, ideological pressure and the crude force of the state had been perceived as two different and alternative means of domination of the class power before him.

Gramsci adds that special organisms are given up by the state to the entrepreneurship of the ruling class, and he argues that Hegel was the first man who built up the theory of parliamentary state. This is true in the sense that the bourgeois class represents a revolution in the state administration and the conception of law. The bourgeois state depends on the will of conformism and gives the state and law an ethical-political role. The bourgeoisie is an open class in the sense that members of the other social classes and groups may have an opportunity of becoming bourgeois through social mobility. It is not a cast (as in the case of estates in feudalism). For this reason it educates the other strata in order to elevate them to its own level. It tries to absorb the society as a whole, we can say, following Gramsci. He attributed a civilising role to the bourgeoisie. But it begins to lose its absorbing capability as the capability of the state and law is consumed and as the civilising role is transferred to civil society. Moreover, the bourgeoisie gets rid of some of its parts (Gramsci 1986:179-84). What is got rid of is, I think, the progressive factions of the class or its own allies.

We have demonstrated that the separated powers of the bourgeois state are the organs of political society. Gramsci observed that the state is not only the executive or government but also the special apparatus of *hegemony*, in other words, civil society. The state is not only a political and juridical organisation. In the bourgeois regime, historical tendency is towards the rising domination of special powers of civil society, which are themselves the state in exact words. He argues that in reality relationship between civil society and the state does not imply a division but an identical relationship that is transferred to a higher scale. This is contrary to the belief shared by liberalism, theoretical syndicalism and economism. For Gramsci, the state is a totality of political and civil societies; in other words, the state is the *hegemony* empowered by force (Gramsci 1986:185). The conception of the state as a watchman or a gendarme (the case of

Lassale) or desire to see it only as an executive (the case of economic and corporate interests) represents a confusion. Characteristics of a civil society are located in the general state conception (Gramsci 1986:184-6). What Gramsci wants to point to is nothing but the immense extension of the state, as stated above: historical tendency is towards the rising domination of special powers of civil society, which are themselves the state in exact words, and special organisms are given up by the state to the entrepreneurship of the ruling class. Special functions are fulfilled either on behalf of the political society or transferred by the political society to civil society. Borders of the bourgeois state can not be drawn easily.

Hegemony and Strategy

One of the pillars of Gramsci's revolutionary strategy is his discussion of the permanent revolution thesis. This strategy, adopted especially by Maoist theories of revolution in the twentieth century, was based on the assumption that the bourgeoisie was inadequate for its own complete revolutionary power and, for this reason, the working class had to complete the bourgeois revolution on behalf of the bourgeois class before its pure socialist struggle to be able to develop in later phase (as a criticism of modern interpretation of this thesis, see Gündoğan 2005). Gramsci observed that the "permanent revolution" as a strategy was valid until the 1848 Revolutions. From then onwards, modern political conditions changed as the state structures became far more complex. Society itself became more organised with mass syndicates, parties and associations. Public and private bureaucracies emerged. For him, many political parties and economic organisations, which are research, control and information centres, can be suggested as political police organisations. The cadres of the parties and syndicates can be easily purchased by modern politics. Because of this organisational level of the state, permanent revolution is replaced by the "civil hegemony" (Gramsci 1986:174). A replacement of the permanent revolution is not realised by socialist or proletarian revolution, but by "civil hegemony." In other words, Gramsci argues that after the 1848 Revolutions, the valid socialist strategy was to obtain "civil hegemony" rather than political power. The state

is based far more than before upon hegemony, which is provided by the special organism of the state in civil society. The period between 1789 and 1848 was suitable for a Jacobin experience. During this period, the state was not complicated and civil society had autonomy in relation to the state. National economies were also autonomous. The party regimes and mass politics were not developed. But, after colonial expansionism, the situation completely changed. Is the formation of civil hegemony related with the bourgeois revolutionary strategy or with the socialist one? Is it suggested for the latter or is it related to the changed nature of the bourgeois domination?

Furthermore, the art and the science of politics changed completely after the Russian Revolution. In the advanced democracies of the West, civil society was complex and resisted against the destructive influences of the economic crises. Gramsci stated that superstructures of civil society form the castles of war. When the defences collapse, this occurs on the surface and another defence wall is built immediately. New positions of war are immediately created and hopes of masses reappear in favour of the status quo. For this reason, he argued, the task is to understand what kind of elements of civil society were linked to the defence systems of the positions of war (Gramsci 1986:155). Here it must be asked whether the civil societies in the West have so much resisting powers against the destructive forces of economic crises. Gramsci seems to build a new strategy against the background of old terms. What he means is nothing but the fact that society and the state are more developed and complex and hence more powerful against revolutionary attacks. It is a seven-headed monster. The modern state is not a state like the Russian monarchy that could be taken over *so easily!* I think that Gramsci ignored the fact that autocratic and centrally organised states, which leave little space for unofficial political organizations and activities, require more preparation for any revolutionary attack. An absence of a developed bourgeois civil society, and hence inadequate civil-political liberties, presents serious difficulties for any revolutionary socialist politics. In such a condition, a large part of the revolutionary energy is consumed against the oppressive measures of the state. Any form of struggle, ideolog-

ical, political, and economic and even an armed one, meets the means of oppression of the state.

Concluding Remarks

Gramsci's works we have dealt with until now suggest numerous concepts and formulations that appear in different and even contradictory meanings in different paragraphs and pages. I think that such a situation can be attributed to an intellectual attempt which tries to develop a theory of political, cultural and ideological leadership on the ground of general Marxist conceptions and constructions such as base-superstructure relationship, classes and class struggle, and socialist revolution. This leadership covers dispersed analyses of state, civil society, "society," classes, parties, groups and intellectuals. Gramsci suggest a new debate upon the relationship between individual and society, class and society, class and state and the base and superstructure.

Gramsci states that:

two great "stratums" can be constructed within superstructure; "civil society", which is, in popular language, a strata that can be called as a totality of private organisations, and "political society", in other words, a state strata; which corresponds to the functions of direct domination... of dominant group who expresses itself in the state or in the legal execution with their function of "hegemony" above all society. [Gramsci 1986:318, author's translation]

Hegemony above all society, here, is attributed to political society, or state whose function is direct domination. However, Gramsci places civil society and political society onto the level of superstructure. Here it is impossible to see what the base of society is composed of and why superstructure is made of civil and political societies. Or, we can ask whether society according to Gramsci is composed exclusively of superstructure. But, as we have seen above, Gramsci suggested civil hegemony and political hegemony. Accordingly, civil or political hegemonies must be realised with and through the two stratums of superstructure. Actually, in Gramsci, society completely seems to have turned into superstructure. Maybe Bobbio's interpretation below helps us to clarify the problem.

Bobbio (1993:114-5) argued that Gramsci's hegemony implies not only a political leadership but also the factor of cultural leadership. Hegemony has not only political meanings but also it is closely related to a new and wider kind of civil society and a new conception of the world. What Gramsci understood from the demise of the state is the re-absorption of political society within civil society. In Marx, Engels and Lenin, the demise of the state is to be caused by the transformation of the base in essence. In contrast, Gramsci sees such demise in relation to the superstructure, in other words, in the complete universalising of civil society (Bobbio 1993:116-7).

This sort of demise of the state, I can say, is nothing but the extension of civil society, self-governing elements and private spheres of individuals towards a state that gets smaller in the process. Civil society has to be transformed and extended at the expense of the state. And these embryonic ideas are why Gramsci's strategy is consumed within the lines of democratic socialism or post-Marxist strategies. As an alternative to Leninism, Laclau and Mouffe count for the merits of Gramsci. He replaces the Leninist notion of political leadership with intellectual and moral leadership. His conception of politics and hegemony implies an articulation and goes beyond the Leninist class alliances (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:65-6). His understanding of leadership entails a "collective will" which is established through ideology as organic cement in the form of "historical block." This ideologically organised historical block is embodied within institutions and apparatuses through a number of articulating principles. By doing so, Gramsci surpasses a rigid base-superstructure dichotomy. Nevertheless, leadership is still attributed to the hegemonic class. However, Gramscian ideology is not reductionist thanks to his perception of "collective will." It is also stated that "the ideological elements articulated by a hegemonic class does not have a necessary class belonging" (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:67). Nevertheless, they argued that in Gramsci there is an "ultimate ontological foundation" in class hegemony. This sets "a limit to the deconstructive logic of hegemony" (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:69). Whatever his drawbacks are, his socialist strategy as the "war of positions," like "collective will," is not constrained

within class struggle and accepts that identities are not fixed but change in process (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:70). His concept of hegemony perceives social complexity and the plurality of historical subjects (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:71) in a way that politics becomes "articulation." Nevertheless, these all cannot rescue Gramsci from class reductionism (Laclau and Mouffe 1992:85).

Establishment of an identical relationship between civil society and the state is to see the relationship as a manifestation or projection of civil society to the state power; in other words, as integration of the civil society into the state power. As I have said above, the state becomes the projected form of civil society through hegemony formation that begins first to manifest itself within the base of society. In addition, a dialectical explanation will show that there must be not only a unity but also an identity of the opposite and conflicting things under process within the same totality. Furthermore, a bourgeois democracy can be easily transformed into a bourgeois dictatorship or terror. None of the rights of the citizens under the bourgeois parliamentary regime is untouchable.

The other criticism comes from John Hoffman with his book *The Gramscian Challenge* (1986). Hoffman interprets Gramsci's contribution, weakness and the position within classical Marxism. Hoffman argues that Gramsci as a theorist of *politics as consent* is acclaimed in the West after 1970s as the father of *Eurocommunism*, which seeks a democratic transition to socialism through a consensual politics and without so-called violent and coercive logic tactics of classical Marxist tradition symbolised in the name of Stalin. Gramscian *politics as consent* is defined by referring to hegemony conception and leadership as opposed to dictatorship and coercion. Hoffman observes that Gramsci is put forward by (some) Western Marxists as an alternative to Marxist-Leninist thought and practice. However, it has to be repeated that Gramsci tries to fuse force and consent as an analysis of the conditions of socialism in the West. Neither does he ignore the force and coercion in socialist and bourgeois politics, nor were Lenin and the Communist International blind in the face of politics as hegemony. It should also be remem-

bered that Gramsci lived in a country where Fascism first introduced itself. Gramsci did not think that force and the seizure of political power were unnecessary, but he thought that force and the seizure of power were not adequate for socialist transformation, putting aside the seizure of political power by socialists.

The intellectual block of the agrarian block (these double blocks can be seen as a re-statement of the relationship between superstructure and the base) organises consent of the Southern people for the Northern capitalism. Gramsci analysed the integration problem of the Italian state by going back to the communal period of the Italian city states, the role of the papacy and the Catholic Church, and the absence of Jacobinism in Italian history. He approached the transformation problem mainly in the framework of superstructural forms, military and political aspects in power relations. For this reason, he seems to overemphasise the organisation of cultural and ideological forms, and hence, intellectuals.

Gramsci paid attention to the analysis of the superstructural forms of society. If we think of the grand theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin, he shifts the emphasis to the position and character of superstructure within social totality. He seems not to have been interested in the political economy of capitalist society, economics of class struggle, the crises-prone character of capitalist production and other material, economic aspects of society. Apart from intellectual one-sidedness, this situation is a shortcoming for a *Marxist father* (if he is accepted as the father of a kind of communism, that is, Eurocommunism)? In addition, for Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, his masterpiece, Fiori observes that "in only a few cases was Gramsci able to arrive at the last state, and makes his notes into something approaching a final draft. On the whole they remain fragmented to the end" (Fiori 1990). It is sure that the fragmented and incomplete character of his prison studies does not decrease Gramsci's works but cannot make us state that he left behind a systematic guide of revolution under relatively developed democratic conditions of capitalism.

Perry Anderson states that Gramsci ignored the feudal character of the Russian state before revolution in 1917. Hence, it can be said that Gramsci

compares a feudal state with the parliamentary state of the West in his time. However, Gramsci's comparison is about the development levels of the civil societal part of the state rather than about the feudal and capitalist states. His comparison is applicable for any systems that are different in terms of their levels of development in the spheres of civil society and in terms of political regimes, party regimes, democracy or dictatorship, civil or military governments, etc.

Here, it can be useful to recall so-called traditional Marxist-Leninist differentiations between bourgeois democracy and dictatorship in particular, and between democracy and dictatorship in general. Bourgeois democracy is put forward as the bourgeois dictatorship as long as bourgeois class as a minority of population has domination over the majority of population thanks to its economic, political and ideological means of domination. Lenin is thought to have ignored the *bourgeois* forms of the state. However, he even sees "democracy" as "one of the forms of the *state*" (Lenin 1992:59). This firstly means that democracy is not *sine qua non* for the existence of the state and secondly that democracy presupposes the existence of the *state*.

Bourgeois dictatorship can exist with parliamentary regimes and consensual politics. It is sure that Fascism needed and was based on a mass support rather than only on violence, force and coercion. The relatively powerful position of civil society in the Western democracies implies that the dominant class can easily rule and offers an immense area for civil organisation and activities outside the state proper as long as destructive economic crises and revolutionary threats are absent or unimportant and as long as radicalism is not connected to the revolutionary classes, and isolated within the centres of science, news, art, literature and even within the public and private administrative functions.

Thanks to its economic power and its political-ideological machine, monopoly capitalism is capable of transferring inner conflicts of capitalist centres to its backward regions. These capability is valid both in the national-local and global contexts of monopoly capitalism. The states of monopoly capitalism centralise political and economic power into few centres while they begin to depend more and

more on popular consent. The formulation can be constructed from the inverse. The bourgeois domination is formed firstly at remote and fragmented levels and then becomes a central power. This formation of power is seen in the workshops where the first *contracts* between labour and capital are made. Society is a labour pool for bourgeois men. As labour becomes a commodity, labour power, it means that bourgeois domination over labour is established at the economic life of society. However, inner and intra class conflicts, and other needs of class systems put into the agenda a state organisation of class's economic power. A powerful state of bourgeois domination has to organise itself possibly in every critical local cell and node of social life. One of the reasons behind the Russian Revolution is that the Tsarist state could not have penetrated into local cells and critical nodes of social power. In this sense, it was not a modern bourgeois state whose secrets Gramsci tried to reveal. States such as the Tsarist state can be accounted as despotic, bureaucratic, and archaic, etc, but it is not a modern centralised state that has extensions towards remote points such as in a spider's web. In addition, its army, which is an important quality of a centralised state, had been nearly destroyed on the eve of the revolution in 1917.

What Gramsci meant by civil society is nothing but the decentralised ("private") organisms of the state, which organises consent by forming (civil) hegemony. Consent has to be organised (only) because the use of force is under the control of the political society of the state. On the other hand, is it correct to perceive force only in the form of police, army and law? Economic life is based on structural relations which individuals have to obey. As put by Hoffman (1986), consent is at the beginning a political economy issue and analysed by classical Marxism in this framework. We can say that civil hegemony is actually realised through spontaneous economic relations. A freedom is given to the labourer at the market, but this freedom is reduced to the freedom of capital as defined systematically by Marx in his *Capital*.

Nevertheless, a consent realised through economic relations is challenged by the emergence of class consciousness and actions of the labourers. This challenge is first absorbed through the "private organ-

isms of the state" (church, syndicates and parties, for instance) in terms of civil hegemony. However, the term *hegemony* in Gramsci's terminology refers to consensual leadership of the supreme class or groups over the allies and friend groups. It cannot be used for the rival class positions. It is a contradiction in the fact that he uses the term for the bourgeois supremacy over all social groups. Hegemony is imposed and realised not only for the allied groups but also rival ones although he claims that supremacy uses force against the enemies and imposes a leadership to the allies. But, if the bourgeoisie can form an alliance with proletariat within the framework of the industrial democracy (as in the case of Giolitti's policy), or if peasantry sees proletariat as an enemy, Gramsci's terminology cannot be accepted as correct. If consent of the enemies is won, and the possible ally is forced, Gramsci takes us away from so-called politics as consent and leaves us with many conflicting conceptions of hegemony.

Gramsci's formulation of civil society as regards the general unity of the state can be reformulated and can be understood in terms of increasing functions of the state in economic, social and ideological areas. State intervention has increased with the development of capitalism while spontaneously the state as an institutional form of class power has to remain legitimate, effective and bearable in the eyes of social classes. Pressures coming from below have to be absorbed through the channels of civil society where all kinds of civil organisations fulfil many functions which the state cannot and must not realise directly. Civil hegemony that is established within and around civil society is not free from force and coercion, but this hegemony is under the guarantorship of the state's political hegemony through military, police and law.

Another point is that civil and political societies are located within the general unity of the state. They are not alternative to each other. It is a fact that a development of one of the two empowers the other. To say that civil hegemony or consensual forms of bourgeois domination increase at the expense of force and political hegemony is incorrect. Development of military technology, police organisation and intelligence units in the West and the East of the world,

which are presented as “security forces” in general, has increased enormously since the childhood of the modern state. Civil hegemony implies social, political and economic rights that have been acquired by the masses mainly through the class struggle of the workers. It is also a product of this class. If the *parliamentary* state has emerged through a struggle mainly between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, *parliamentary democracy* has developed through the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the workers. Universal suffrage is a concession for the bourgeoisie and a fruit of struggle for the working classes. However, once it is given to the masses, and once organisations, parties and clubs are organized more than before, the masses could not freely express their voting behaviours. Voting power requires a far more complex organisation and production of ideological thoughts.

However, ideologies are no longer produced and imposed by the state’s political or civil organs of hegemony. But they are also instruments and languages of political struggle which is always made for certain purposes and of consciousness in the making of classes and interest groups. Even more, proletarian ideology is not produced by the state. Religious

ideology does not emerge within the bourgeois state but is exploited, encouraged and put forward against the consciousness of the labourers. Here, we have to recall that Marx and Engels placed the proletariat outside civil society in their *German Ideology*. Civil society carried the class characteristics of bourgeois individualism. For this reason, civil society as a term of political analysis is replaced by Marx with an analysis of “political economy” of the bourgeois society. After the turning point of the 1848 Revolutions, which is seen by Gramsci as a rupture for revolutionary strategy, it was also seen that the parliamentary state developed and began to reduce political activity into party politics through which masses are integrated into the dominant class and its state power. Hence masses cannot see any division between itself and the political power. The bourgeois state erected its power upon the consent of masses. This state also used naked force, but even this force was based on the initial consent of the masses, which was assumed as existing initially in the laws and regulations enacted by the representatives of the masses themselves. The masses thought that their consents and decisions determined the state power.

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