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Q1(e)

Linkage between Power and Hegemony.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Concept of power, hegemony, ideology and legitimacy.

Concept of power, hegemony, ideology and legitimacy.

Core demand of the question

- Define power as capacity to produce effects (10 marks)
- Define hegemony as leadership plus consent in civil society
- Show Gramsci's link between the two
- Contrast crude coercion and **Dahl's** decision-making power

Revision summary

Power is the capacity to produce political effects, from **Dahl's** A-over-B decisions to agenda control and class structure.

Hegemony, for Gramsci, is leadership plus organised consent in the institutions of civil society.

A hegemonic class presents its project as universal; coercion remains in reserve when consent fails.

The link is that hegemony is power that has been made to look like common sense rather than like open force.

This account sits between a purely behavioural map of decisions and a purely coercive theory of the state.

Introduction

Power is the capacity to produce effects on others' conduct and on public outcomes. Hegemony, in **Antonio Gramsci's** sense, is a form of that capacity that works through leadership, culture, and consent in civil society, not only through the police. The two terms are linked: hegemony is power that has become accepted as common sense.

Body**Power**

Dahl defined power in behavioural terms: **A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something B would not otherwise do.** **Bachrach** and **Baratz** added agenda control. **Lukes** added the shaping of wants. **Marx** located class power in ownership of the means of production. These are faces of the same problem: who can determine what happens.

Hegemony

Gramsci wrote in the **Prison Notebooks** that in the West the state is surrounded by trenches of civil society: parties, churches, schools, press. Rule is not only dominio (coercion) but

direzione (leadership). A class is hegemonic when allied groups accept its project as universal. Consent is organised, not spontaneous. Crisis of hegemony appears when that consent cracks and coercion becomes visible.

The link is that hegemony is power plus legitimacy-work in culture. It explains why a constitutional state can serve class ends without daily tanks, and why **Dahl's** open decisions may still sit inside a manufactured common sense. Indian nationalist and caste publics show the same: who defines the nation is a hegemonic question, not only a question of votes.

Flow diagram

Power -> Dahl decisions
Power -> Agenda and wants
Hegemony -> Consent in civil society
Hegemony -> Leadership of a class project
Power -> Hegemony

Conclusion

Power is effective capacity. Hegemony is that capacity exercised as leadership and organised consent in civil society. Gramsci joins the two and thereby extends both Marxist class analysis and **Dahl's** decision-making map. Coercion remains when consent fails; it is not the whole of political power.

Facts & figures

Prison Notebooks

Gramsci distinguished coercion from hegemony and located the latter in parties, churches, schools, and other civil-society organisations.

Dahl

Power as A getting B to do what B would not otherwise do is the behavioural core that hegemony theory says is incomplete.

Lukes

The third face of power, shaping what people want, is close to Gramsci's account of common sense.