

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2024 · 10 marks

Write on the Linkage between Power and Hegemony.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Power not only coercion → also works through consent → that consensual face is hegemony
R2 Dahl's overt "power over" → but the deepest power shapes consent → **Gramsci** names this hegemony

Body Row

Gramsci links power & hegemony → supremacy in two modes: domination + intellectual and moral leadership
→ political society = coercion / civil society = consent → ruling-class worldview becomes common sense →
unequal order seems just → power exercised with consent = hegemony → matches **Lukes'** third dimension
(shapes beliefs, not just actions) → most durable, explains why unequal order survives

Counter-view

Hegemony never complete → must be constantly renewed → contestable through a slow war of position

Conclusion routes

R1 Hegemony is power's deepest, most durable face → rule rests on belief, not force
R2 Power as hegemony = domination so secure it no longer needs coercion

Power is the capacity to control behaviour. Robert Dahl captured its overt form: A has power over B when A can get B to do what B would otherwise not do. Yet power is not only command backed by force. It also works through consent and here lies its linkage with hegemony. Hegemony is dominance maintained not merely through coercion but through consent.

Antonio Gramsci built this connection. For Gramsci, the supremacy of a social group shows itself in two ways - as domination and as intellectual and moral leadership. Domination rests on coercion of political society: government, law, police and army.

Hegemony rests on the consent secured by civil society - family, school, church, media and culture. Through these, the ruling class makes its own worldview appear natural, moral and common sense, so that even an unequal order seems just. When power is apparently exercised with the consent of its subjects, it becomes hegemony.

This shows hegemony as the deepest form of power. It matches Steven Lukes' third dimension, where power shapes the very beliefs and preferences of the ruled rather than only overriding their actions. Such power is also the most durable. It explains why unequal societies continue without open revolt, for rule now rests on belief rather than force.

Hegemony, however, is never complete. It must be constantly renewed and can be contested through a slow war of position. Power as hegemony, then, is rule so secure that it no longer needs force.