

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 10 marks

Gramsci's concept of Hegemony.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** hegemony = **Gramsci's** answer to "why no proletarian revolution" → bourgeois power exceeds the economic base
- R2** rule rests on ideas + culture → ruling worldview made "common sense" → consent, not force alone

Body flow

hegemony = predominance of one class → coercion + consent → **Roger Simon**: coercive power + persuasive influence → site = civil society (schools, churches, media) → civil society a real seat of power, beyond the state (vs orthodox Marxism) → **Bobbio**: theoretician of superstructure

Counter-view

hegemony neither total nor permanent → counter-hegemony built through "war of position" in civil society → consent can be contested before power is seized

Conclusion routes

- R1** hegemony frees Marxism from economic determinism → power located in culture, not the economy alone
- R2** while hegemony holds, revolution is impossible → ideological ground must be won first

Hegemony was Antonio Gramsci's answer to why the revolution Marx predicted never came. The bourgeoisie, he argued, rules not only by controlling the means of production but by controlling ideas and culture. It projects its worldview so successfully that subordinate classes accept it as "common sense".

Hegemony thus means the predominance of one social class over another through both coercion and consent. According to Roger Simon, its starting point is a combination of coercive power & persuasive influence over the ruled. This persuasion works through civil society - schools, churches and media - which Gramsci, unlike orthodox Marxists, treated as a real site of power alongside the state. For this focus, N. Bobbio called him a theorist of the superstructure.

But hegemony is not permanent. So long as it holds, revolution is impossible; the working class must build a counter-hegemony, winning a "war of position" within civil society before any direct assault on power. In this way hegemony freed Marxism from economic determinism, locating power in culture, not economy alone.