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Western Hegemony over the Oriental Resources

Abstract

This paper examines the neo-occidental hegemony over the Oriental resources. It illustrates how the West established hegemonic control over the Oriental resources. Hegemony is the power or dominance that in the social group holds over other. Western hegemony over the East in this paper refers to some kinds of European hegemony and then to American hegemony. First, European hegemony can be summarized in the following: Manpower and raw materials, which were considered as the source of the industrial revolution in Europe. Second, The US emerged as the dominant economic, political and technological power in every sense of the word. It has created many conceptual bases in order to sustain its hegemonic power such as globalization, new world order and war with terror. At this point, US became a hegemon that is able to absorb the resources and oil from the Middle

East. However, the Oriental naive response towards occidental hegemony is the real meaning of hegemony.

Keywords: Western Hegemony. Oriental Resources. Raw Materials, Manpower, oil.

The concept of hegemony

The concept of hegemony is one of the prevailing political concepts. Its origins are Greek, meaning "capable," i.e., a dominant leader. In other words, it is an effective and influential presence that controls and influences all variables on the earth. Hegemony does not necessarily mean superiority but also the ability to transform that superiority into a political, military, economic and cultural power in order to coexist with international changes, and act as a servant to the desires of the dominant. Therefore, Hegemony refers to the domination of certain social groups over others through relations of consent and coercion (Furnaro, 3) In the history of human domination over certain social groups, which is also termed as hegemony, two significant tools called consent and coercion have always been employed. The term hegemony was introduced by Antonio Gramsci to refer to the consent of the working-class people, which comes under his philosophy of immanence to describe the social history of humanity as an integral part of nature. Though the notion of hegemony is used by Gramsci to describe the consent of the working class, his philosophy of immanence, where social history is understood as internal to nature (Furnaro, 3) this concept facilitates a broader understanding of the working of the ecological process and environmental resource struggle. With the help of this concept, Gramsci explains how certain regimes are reproduced with the inclusion of a certain level of coercion and some manipulation of active consent. According to Gramsci, hegemony represents the status of the most powerful country in the international system or the position of a dominant state in a specific region. For Gramsci,

hegemony entails 'cooperation ensured by force', combining social and political supervision, force and consent (Barrett, 1997: 239).

According to Yilmaz, hegemony is the way of changing norms and rules of international system, which based on one's own desire and motivation by having the capability and power. This means that there should be strong and enough power to affect global events; otherwise, it would be a dangerous illusion. Hegemony seems effective in structuring power relations through 'dominance and subordination'. Regarding this, Lull says: "dominance and subordination in the field of relations structured by power". But at the same time hegemony is not only a tool to maintain power relations alone but used as a method to control and maintain power as well.

Roots of Hegemony:

The term hegemony - from ancient Greek 'hegemony' - expresses literally the dominant and oppressive status of one element above the other in the system. Plato divided people into two categories: rational Greeks and savage barbarians. Anyone who was not Greek and did not speak Greek was a barbaric savage, and deserved to be a slave to Greece. Marx, a German sociologist, and his international communist movement, contributed a great deal to this philosophical perception of hegemony. Before Marx, Vladimir Lenin used the term 'hegemony' to describe the political leadership of the working-class people in the Russian democratic revolution. But later on, Antonio Gramsci elaborated the concept by restructuring the idea as to how the ruling capitalist class- the bourgeoisie- establishes and maintains its control in reality. Marxist theory suggests the working of capitalist ideologies which make its way through the dominant bourgeoisie culture which in its turn represents the interests of the ruling economic class. This is the way society functions in a capitalist model

where consent is created by postulating a particular standard and which later on is expected to be followed by the subjects under its regime.

Hegemony, according to Gramsci, propagated not through some sort of control and violence or through political and economic coercion but largely through legalizing its own ideologies. With the passage of time, the cultural form of hegemony becomes a part and parcel of society and people in the structure of the society easily absorbs passively all that is given to them or expected of them. According to Marx, this is the way society has always been controlled and regulated and which always tends to produce a sort of social homeostasis, or “moral and political passivity” (Gramsci 1971:333). While coercion is exclusively a domain of the state, the manipulative agents of civil society are churches, schools, mass media and the family that inherits as well as naturalizes the working of the hegemonic structure in the society (Gramsci 1996:91)

Hegemony over Oriental resources

Hegemony is control, whether economic, political or intellectual. Hegemony is an act of thought from the point of view of life and not merely interests necessitated by necessity or emergency. It is first and foremost a cultural and intellectual conflict. We know that every principle has a way of disseminating it. The Western way of spreading its principle is colonialism, and colonialism requires that the intellectual, economic, and political hegemony of the Orient be tightened to keep them weak so that they can control them and erase them at any point in history. The acquisition of power in the economic sphere was solely the result of having scientific power. The Western scientific and economic institution was both cooperative and supportive, serving each other and remaining in one line together. Good natural and human resources, economic management and the necessary industrial and

technical equipment have enabled European societies to acquire competitive and economic power.

To show a clear picture of Western hegemony over the Orient, this paper refers to some kinds of European hegemony and then to American hegemony. First, European hegemony can be summarized thus: Manpower and raw materials. The slave trade became a major commodity in the sixteenth century. Due to the increasing demand for this commodity, the competition between the Portuguese companies and the British, Dutch and French companies, which were founded to drain all agricultural crops and minerals from Africa and use the power of its people. "The slave trade was a very ancient practice in Africa. The Europeans did not invent it. They only exploited it by impelling the Africans to 'derive the greater part of their resources from it'".(Unesco,150). The relationship between Europe and Africa has become a trade relationship with slaves and resources. "Between 1441 and the middle of the nineteenth century, the expanding slave trade ultimately became Black Africa's only link with Europe and America. The establishment in the New World of European sugar, cotton and tobacco plantations, as well as mining for precious metals, gave rise to a demand for an abundant, cheap manpower force which could not be met by either the Amerindians or the European workers." (Unesco,151). The slaves were treated as non-humans. They were hanged behind their necks; anyone showed signs of bad intentions were killed in cold blood and their bodies were left to wild monsters or thrown into the sea. Many slaves on journey died and committed suicide because of the misconduct meted out to them.

The number of slave trade centres in 1791 reached forty, fourteen of which were British, three French, five Dutch, four Portuguese and four Danish. In 1799, these centres had thirty-eight thousand slaves in Britain, twenty thousand in France and four thousand in Dutch. The share of Danish did not exceed 2000 and the Portuguese reached one thousand as

if the British alone had monopolized the transfer of half of West Africa's slaves, which was seventy-four thousand (Alliyunni 29).

The period from the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century was considered the period of intensive Western exploration of the African Continent. These discoveries were carried out through hundreds of Voyages by slave traders, missionaries and explorers to the Black Continent, whose purpose was to obtain agricultural crops, metals, rubber, timber, etc. This wealth played a role in the establishment of the industrial revolution in Europe. Regarding this, Alliyunni said “These resources contributed greatly to the supply of raw materials to European factories to produce goods that meet the needs of the domestic and international markets. Therefore, it was not unfair to consider that the industrial revolution in Europe was based on the wealth of the African continent, both natural and human”.

All slaves were employed as domestic servants and farm workers while the number of slaves in the French West Indies alone was about 500,000. Most of those worked in sugar cane cultivation. Some slaves, especially those at an early age, were recruited for fourteen years in the French army and were used to invade Africa “They were given intensive military training and were subsequently used during the conquest of French West Africa and Madagascar.” (Unesco,158). Nowadays, immigration has become another kind of Hegemony. According to Alexandra Schiner, principal human rights analyst at Vyrisk Maplecroft, “Many illegal migrants entering the EU are so in debt to a trafficking gang or unscrupulous agents that they have no hope of paying that cost,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation (Bacchi n/p)

Since the establishment of the Dutch East India Company, the company captured the Gold coast in 1643 and was followed by French and British companies in 1669 where the company secured the supply of all the raw resources needed for manufacturing in England. It was because of the British military shield that Britain was able to colonize all the lands in the

Indian subcontinent by the nineteenth century. In Africa, companies engaged in the extraction of gold, diamonds and other precious metals. Thus, gold played an extraordinary role in meeting the monetary-capital needs of Western Europe. "African gold was also the main source for the mintage of Dutch gold coin in the 17th century; helping Amsterdam to become the financial capital of Europe in that period". (Rodney, 130).

To move on from European hegemony to American hegemony, American hegemony began in 1873 following the decline of British hegemony (1837-1914) when the warring forces of World War II emerged, except the United States, which was able to become the world's most powerful force. The US emerged as the dominant economic, political and technological power after the war. In every sense of the word, America became a hegemon.

The United States of America, with its strength and its military forces, cannot control the peoples and nations, but at the same time use the economy and the siege of the peoples as a means of multiplication and exhaustion of the countries and peoples. We observed how America, apart from Saddam's regime, practiced the economic siege of the Iraqi people, frightening and terrifying at the time. This coincided with a Secret Pentagon Report: DPG: Défense Planning Guidance, prepared by Paul Wolfett, Secretary of Defence of the Bush Administration, and Louis Libby, director of the US Vice President's Office. The most important point in that report is the recommendation to prevent any regional power from controlling resources that could make it a great power and interruption of an industrial power capable of composing (USDoD n/p). The fact that the Orient has brought down the standard of living, poverty, and support of the separatist movement and the burning of armed conflicts in many countries of the Middle East reveals all of the deception and falsity of American capitalism under the cover of globalization since the second half of the twentieth century.

After the Cold War 1991, the United States began to look for a new vision to maintain its hegemonic dominance. Many concepts have been created such as 'new world order' that

was defined by President George H.W. Bush, but the concept disappeared in a short time because of its unfulfilled content. Globalization was coined by Clinton for increasing political and economic relations and maintaining world peace. Bush had been more interested in the development of American interests, and he defined the fundamental principles of its strategy following 9/11 attacks as 'hegemony in war with terror' (Yilmaz 1)

September 11 was the event which led to the spread of American hegemony and change its policy in the Middle East. Its policy in the Middle East was not to bring allies to the brink of bankruptcy; rather, its implicit goal was to reproduce these countries from within and resurrect them on the scale of US foreign policy strategy (the killing, destruction and restructuring of states)

Hegemony over the oil:

The Middle East's rich oil resources played a crucial role of the political and military conflict of the 20th century. Even the two world wars were linked to competition for access to the rich oil resources of the Middle East. The British aim was controlling over the Middle East's oil supplies and then by 1940s the US began to rely on the Middle East's oil. However, the United States consumed one-third of the global oil, so the influences over the oil-rich countries in the Middle East increased from 10 per cent to 60 per cent from 1940 to 1967 (The Editors N.p). The most important strategic factor governing U.S. ambitions in the Middle East is oil. Controlling the global oil spigot is required for controlling the Middle East which leads to control the global economy (Harvey 19). The US went further to coin a concept 'Grand Area planning', which is defined as the area, which is necessary for world control. Grand Area means the Middle East area that is regarded as the old part of the British Empire (The Editors N.p). in order to control the oil in the Middle East, four wars in the region has been waged by the United States Since the end of the Cold War; one in Libya, one in Afghanistan, and two in Iraq.

There is no doubt that the United States controlled oil in Iraq. At the beginning of the US-led war against Iraq, On 22nd March 2003, the US forces' chief commander in Iraq, General Tommy Franks was explaining one of the key objectives of the Operation Iraqi Freedom as 'to secure Iraq's oil fields and resources' (CNN.com 2003). Furthermore, the United states sees the whole region as a crucial part of its strategy of global power. It protects them and without it they would not be safe, so these countries could pay for this defence otherwise they may be gone: "Saudi Arabia should be paying the United States many billions of dollars for our defence of them. Without us, gone" (Bobic n/p). At the same time Donald Trump stated that "Tell Saudi Arabia and others that we want (demand!) free oil for the next ten years or we will not protect their private Boeing 747s. Pay up!" (Bobic n/p).

Oriental naive role towards Western hegemony

The hegemony over the Orient was a result of beliefs and studies by the West. For them, the Orient should be governed and controlled. "Thus in Lamartine's climactic vision the Orient is reborn as European right to rule over it: This sort of suzerainty thus defined, and consecrated' as a European -right, will consist principally in the right to occupy one or another territory, as well as the coasts, in order to found there either free cities, or European colonies, or commercial ports of call." (Said 179). On the other hand, the passive role of the Orient towards the Western beliefs and studies led to a real hegemony over the Orient. Furthermore, the belief of the Orientals in the superiority of the West is the real meaning of hegemony. It means that the Oriental naive response toward western scientific power makes the West a great nation and paved the way for them to control and rule the East, which led to hegemony over the Oriental resources and present colonization. "I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence". (Said 208) .

Conclusion

This paper has examined the Western hegemony over the Orient. It showed the relationship between the West and the Orient since early time as a hegemon relationship over resources. Europe has dominated the Eastern resources, Manpower and raw materials for long time so it is not unfair to say Eastern resources are the source of Europe prosperity. This study has also studied the American hegemony as a great power in the world that controls oriental resources easily. It has coined many conceptual bases to sustain its hegemonic dominance such as 'New World Order' 'Globalization' 'War with Terror' and 'Grand Area Planing'. It used all these conceptual bases to compel Middle East rich oil countries to dominate them better. Despite the wars waged by the United States with the Middle East, like in Iraq and Libya, it considers itself responsible for peace in the Middle East and that the Middle East must pay its resources to maintain peace in the region otherwise it will be gone soon. This paper also shows the naive role of the Orient towards the Western hegemony as a source for this hegemony.

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