

## **Hegemony or Dominance?**

### A Gramscian Analysis of US Ascendancy

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#### **Abstract**

Hegemony, for Antonio Gramsci, is the use of consent and coercion in order to establish control over a population or a state. It is this balance between the two that is fundamental to Gramsci's theory. Furthermore, the distinction between two types of intellectuals, traditional and organic, is central to the diffusion of elite ideology and obtaining the consent of the masses. First, this study surveys the various Gramscian and neo-Gramscian literature, which develops the background for my central argument. The following section briefly examines the construction of a "common sense" in America focusing on two fundamental aspects: American exceptionalism and Liberalism. Finally, my study takes a critical look at American policy during the Regan Administration, specifically focusing on Ronald Reagan's ability to assume the role as an intellectual, used in the Gramscian tradition. However, I argue, although Ronald Reagan recaptured the common sense of the American people, manipulation and coercion were instrumental in reestablishing American dominance. Thus, power during the Reagan administration lacked a critical element of hegemony, consent, and can no longer be defined as hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

“Our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity” (O’Sullivan 1839, 426).

Over the past eighty years the United States has accumulated an unparalleled amount of power, which the modern world has never seen before. For sixty-five years the United States military, economic, and cultural influence has encompassed the globe assimilating the majority of the global society to its own cultural and economic level and ousting those who deviate from its ideological path. Although the United States’ great ascendancy began in the 1920s with the emergence of a full-fledged consumer society, which captivated the Old World and took off with the end of World War II, the idea of “American Destiny” dates back to the earliest settlers. Organic Intellectuals and Civil Society, which will be discussed further in the following section, were influential in spreading the elite’s idea of American destiny.

“Like the elites in other countries engaged in the ideological enterprise, their American counter parts (predominantly of English decent) constructed elaborate explanations for their country’s dominion and created glowing images of its destiny... The resulting nationalist notions came to circulate widely thanks to publicly funded education, public celebrations, religious sermons, memorials and monuments, and the propaganda of political parties. And as they gained in reach, they were to prove important- as a force for creating cultural coherence out of a multiplicity of ethnic identities, as a response to a world of jostling European nationalisms, and as both a justification and a tool for a central government devoted to an ambitious agenda” (Hunt 2007, 33).

Due to the constraints of this paper, a thorough history dating back to the original American settlers is not in the scope of the present study; however, Anglo-Saxon dominion, which diffused the ideologies that are central to the history of US ascendancy is significant to America’s quest for global hegemony.

The trajectory of building a Gramscian vision of hegemony runs deep through America’s short history; however, for the purposes of this study I will focus on Ronald Regan’s ability to capture the common sense of the American people and diffuse a common global ideology: liberalism. In the first section of this paper I will provide a general understanding of the Gramscian approach to the reader through Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* and the insights of Gramscian scholars. The second section of this paper will be dedicated to demonstrating how early foundations of US liberal ideology and culture propelled the United States’ into a position to take a global lead at the end of WWII. Third, I will discuss how the Regan Administration regained its global supremacy after the oil shocks of the 1970s and reclaimed its position as the sole super-power. Lastly, I argue that while capturing the consent and common sense of the American people, the Reagan

administration sidestepped international consent and potential consensual hegemony occupying its position as an imperialist state.

### **Antonio Gramsci**

Antonio Gramsci was a philosopher and political theorist whose discontent with the subordination of the peasants and the economic and social divide amongst the populations of Northern and Southern Italy brought him to the study of class relations and political activism. His most influential works, *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks, hereafter, PN*), were written in an Italian prison with nearly no research material (Hawley 1980, 1). They were composed during the rise of fascism in Italy and later Germany and reflect Gramsci's thoughts on this period and the counterrevolution that was taking place. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* have had a global influence, particularly in later interpretations of Marxism, but have yet to make a deep impact on American social thought.

Building on Marx, Gramsci focused on capitalism as a historically distinct economic system in which the social and class relationships within the system were rooted in historical structures. Although Gramsci is considered the most influential Marxist thinker to come out of the Western world, he was critical of Marx's historical materialism and the scientific determinism of his philosophy. According to Salamini (1974, 370), "Gramsci's historicism fosters thought and action in terms of different and alternative strategies rather than in terms of necessary, constant, or immutable economic laws." It is this fostering of thought and action that seeks to reinvent the social structure and create a new existence (revolutionary change).

As a journalist, a theatre critic and a political activist, Gramsci always held the collective consciousness of societies close. In fact, for Gramsci, it is the collective will which is revolutionary. Will for Gramsci was always considered to be the *collective will* of the proletariat or *political will*, never the *individual will* (Hawley 1980, 2). The collective act of will is in the proletariat's ability to create a counterhegemonic force, the development of a world view autonomous of and opposed to capitalist social relations (Hawley 1980, 2). In contrast to Marxist philosophy, a revolutionary social conscience does not flow innately with the changing of a social system (feudalism to capitalism): It is a stage in the process of self-realization, or a realization of one's relationship to the means of production and the ingrained conflict within this relationship. The unity between these social forces becomes what Gramsci defines as a "historical bloc" (Hawley 1980, 2).

Gramsci's analysis of the "historical bloc" is crucial to his theory of the role of the state in a social system. For Gramsci, the state is a "historical bloc" of a specific ruling class (Adamson 1979, 46). Gramsci states,

"to construct an organic passage from the other classes into their own, i.e., to enlarge their class sphere 'technically and ideologically.... The bourgeoisie is a class in continuous movement...capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level. The entire function of

the state has been transformed; the state has become an educator... (Gramsci 1971, 260).

The state becomes a part of the bourgeoisie assimilating the entire society, unifying the social contradictions between the proletariat and bourgeoisie creating a specific “historical bloc”. Gramsci’s discussion of the relationship between class and state relied heavily on his definition of the role of the intellectual within society. According to Gramsci, “All men are intellectuals, one can therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci 1971, 9). Gramsci distinguishes between two types of intellectuals, the “organic intellectual and the traditional intellectual”. The capacity of the “organic intellectual” to be entrepreneurial in character and politically organize the masses provides them with the ability to reproduce and transmit particular conceptions of the world (Crehan 2002, 139). According to Gramsci, the history of a new social class is always accompanied by what he defines as the “organic intellectual”. Gramsci is concerned here with the “organic intellectuals” ability to lead the emerging class and help to maintain its dominance.

“It leads the classes which are its allies, and dominates those which are its enemies. Therefore, even before attaining power a class can lead; when it is in power it becomes dominant, but continues to lead as well...there can and must be a political hegemony even before the attainment of governmental power, and one would not count solely on the power and material force which such a position gives in order to exercise political leadership or hegemony” (Gramsci 1971, 57).

The “traditional intellectual”, on the other hand, does not exercise any political functions over the masses. The “traditional intellectual” has pre-existent structural ties to the dominant group; they are essentially the social glue, which holds together the ideological world view of the dominant class with the “common sense” of the subordinate class. “Traditional intellectuals” once tied to the dominant groups of history, for Gramsci have evolved into a “crystallized social group, one which sees itself continuing uninterruptedly through history and thus independent of the struggle of groups” (Gramsci 1971, 452). Thus, an essential task for the revolutionary party is to reverse the ideology of the traditional intellectual by assimilating them with the ideology of the emerging group.

“Thus there are historically formed specialized categories for the exercise of intellectual function. They are formed in connection with all social groups, especially in connection with the more important, and they undergo more important and complex elaboration in connection with the dominant social group. One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and conquer “ideologically” the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is quicker and more efficacious the

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more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectual” (Gramsci 1971, 10).

The “organic intellectual” thus becomes the intellectual leader of the masses while the traditional intellectuals become the spirit of the counterhegemon.

Hegemony, for Gramsci, must result from the consent of the masses to be directed in all aspects of social life. The crisis of the state takes root when the ruling class has lost its consensus and is no longer leading, but only dominating. For a thorough analysis of the ruling class and the counterhegemon, Gramsci draws from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* to define what Gramsci conceptualizes as the *Modern Prince* (vanguard party). Contrary to Machiavelli’s prince, the modern prince is a productive collective subject, instituting the revolutionary will of the masses against subordinate and dominant structural relations (Kalyvas 2000, 354).

Gramsci refers to hegemony as the tactical and instrumental need of building inter-class alliances and of constructing a unitary political bloc under the political and ideological leadership of the working class capable of challenging the dominant position of the ruling class (Kalyvas 2000, 353). However, the hegemon is not solely a dominant structure; it also must provide new ethical and moral values strong enough to create a new radical collective will. In his view, the councils of “organic intellectuals” must be organs of the proletariat’s power, replacing the capitalist in all its functions (Gramsci 1971, 258). Thus, the council, which is democratically chosen (organic intellectuals) becomes the educator and a moral reformer. This idea of the council becomes contradictory to the Marxist and Machiavellian tradition that it is only by brute force and violence that new states and political orders can be erected.

According to Gramsci, hegemony is consent, and a stable and legitimate state should not cease to lead and strengthen its basis for consent. Gramsci describes in great length the problems of the modern dictatorship and the need for consent in a modern society; however, for the purpose of this paper I will list what I believe to be Gramsci’s three fundamental reasons for the failures of a dictatorship.

First, modern society has ever growing complexities brought about by interstructural organizations and relations. The independence of these organizations makes consent and persuasion necessary, which would make the radical revolt led by a proletariat dictator irrelevant in a modern society. Second, modern society has emancipated itself from many forms of subordination and exploitation found in pre-modern societies. Furthermore, individuals have become citizens and enjoy the benefits of formal rights. Lastly, the king has been replaced by a new body of politics in the modern world. Gramsci states, “the protagonist of the new Prince could not in the modern epoch be an individual hero, but only the political party. The communist party is a collective legislator, the modern, anonymous, faceless founder of new states” (Gramsci 1971, 171). Thus, *The Prince*, or the Marxist dictator is no longer relevant in a modern society and the new

revolutionary party cannot create a new communist state without the consent of the masses. According to Kalyvas, “democracy is a hegemonic world, and its opposite is domination” (Kalyvas 2000, 360).

The revolutionary act is that of the “organic intellect” to formulate a strategy to convince the general mass of the legitimacy of the new state and the purpose of their sacrifice. The new state to Gramsci is democratic and based on worldwide participation, and the goal is to formulate a hegemonic strategy appropriate for opposing capitalist and Western politics. Therefore, radical formation can only take place when radical strategy based on the collective will of the masses, which are democratically organized, strive to establish an autonomous society (Kalyvas 2000, 361).

The theories of Antonio Gramsci, specifically the *PN*, represent one of the most important contributions to Marxism in the West during the rise of Italian and German fascism. From their origins in the early fascist era, Gramsci’s writings have had a long impact. His ideas on the modern class structure, the collective will, and the need for a new counterhegemonic force were inspirational to anti-capitalist movements such as, *Operaismo*, the Italian workers movement of the late 60s. His *Notebooks* were and continue to be influential to neo-Gramscian scholars who continue to draw from Gramsci to explain current patterns of hegemony and dominion, which leads to a review of the modern Gramscian literature.

## Neo-Gramscian Literature

Neo-Gramscianism has seen a significant emergence of literature since Robert Cox’s influential contribution, *Production, Power and World Order*, written in 1987. Cox provides a critical theory route to hegemony, world order, and historical change, which has laid the theoretical foundation for neo-Gramscian theorists and the Amsterdam School of International Relations. Neo-Gramscian theorists examine how existing social or world orders have come into being, how norms, institutions or practices therefore emerge, and what forces may have the emancipator potential to change or transform the prevailing order.

For Cox, a critical theory examines the dialectical phenomenon throughout history, not just concerned for the past, but with the continual process of historical change and the potential for alternative forms of development (Cox 1987, 133-134). Unlike neo-Realism and neo-Liberalism, in which hegemony is mainly based on mere military and economic strength, neo-Gramscian hegemony appears as an, “expression of broadly based consent, manifested in the acceptance of ideas and supported by material resources and institutions, which is initially established by social forces occupying a leading role within a state, but then projected outwards on a world scale” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 87). A historical bloc, for Gramsci, or a historical phase, for Cox, are identified when a coherent fit has occurred between material power, the development of collective world images and the administration of an order through a set of institutions claiming universality (Burnham 1991, 75). Furthermore, for Cox, all structures are the outcome of interaction between three specific variables, which each possesses a real

autonomy: 1) ideas, 2) institutions, and 3) material capabilities (Cox 1987, 218). Thus, hegemony is a social structure, economic structure, and a political structure; and it must consist of all of these parts to provide relative stability within the international order. On the other hand, if it does not contain all of these things, non-hegemonic phases are likely to take place, in which states advance and protect the interests of particular national social classes and no single power can establish its legitimacy resulting in international instability (Cox 1987, 8).

For Gramsci and Cox, before a hegemon is recognized a hegemon, the formation of a historic bloc must take place (Burnham 1991, 76). Burnham states (1991, 76), “the formation of a historic bloc organized around a set of hegemonic ideas, a dominant ideology, which temporarily forms the basis for an alliance between social classes.” Thus, a successful historic bloc is organized by a set of intellectual and moral leadership. Burnham takes this further by stating (1991, 76), “For neo-Gramscians the state is held to comprise not only the machinery of government but also aspects of civil society, press, church, and mass culture, which stabilize existing power relations.” The hegemonic world order emerges with the formation of a historic bloc, which occurs when the social forces and ideology of a dominant class are accepted as universal by a subordinate class: the convergence of the dominant social, political, and economic ideology to a universal ideology.

A significant amount of the neo-Gramscian literature has linked hegemonic power to a combination of manipulation of material incentives, and a subtler component, which works at the level of substantive beliefs rather than material payoffs. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan state that this is the result of the socialization of leaders in secondary nations. “Elites in secondary states buy into and internalize norms that are articulated by the hegemon and therefore pursue policies consistent with the hegemon’s notion of international order” (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990, 283). Kupchan and Ikenberry argue that socialization occurs primarily after wars and political crisis, periods of marked international turmoil and restructuring as well as the fragmentation of ruling coalitions and legitimacy crises at the domestic level. Secondly, they argue elite receptivity to the norms articulated by the hegemon is essential to the socialization process. Thus, norms may initially take root at the level of the general populace; however, they must eventually flow up the elite ladder for them to have effects on behavior. Thirdly, socialization occurs simultaneously with coercive exercise of power (Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990, 284).

Many scholars argue that Post-WWII US hegemony can be characterized by universal consent that incorporated the subordinate classes. In contrast, the oil shocks of the 1970s led American international policy into a new direction. Stephen Gill (2000, 3) defined this later strategy as “supremacist” strategies, which take a more coercive form and seek to develop dominion over apparently scattered and atomized sets of interests- interests that have not cohered into effective political coalitions to offset the dominant power. He goes further to call this shift, “disciplinary neo-liberalism”, which has very significant consequences on social relations and political settlements. It involves the growth in the power and discipline of market forces, and thus of capital relative to labor, as well as relative to

many governments. According to Gill (2000, 3), it is linked to the unleashing of worldwide competitive forces and what has been called competitive deregulation. It also exerts pressure on governments to accommodate their macroeconomic and other economic policies to the categorical imperatives of neo-liberal globalization. Over the last thirty years, the US has increasingly encouraged structural adjustments and other policies, through the World Bank and IMF, which have resulted in a greater economic liberalization. In fact, Gill argues that the US' hegemonic position is not decreasing. Although different than the consensual hegemonic power expressed in the immediate post-War years, US dominion is increasing due to a gradually integrated capitalist economy, in which the United States stands in the center.

In the past decade we are seeing a discretization of US hegemony and a rift between the masses and the ruling ideology. Gill presciently stated (2000, 23),

“New forms of political struggle are emerging that will shape global politics in coming years- as we have seen recently in Seattle in 1999 and last weekend (This was taken from a speech written for Yale University a week before the demonstrations against international financial institutions in Washington) in Washington DC. It is important to remember that these forces are not just groups of activists per se. They represent a diverse range of institutions and organizations throughout the world.”

The forces that came together to protest against such organizations as the World Bank and IMF represent a new form of transnational political agency, and potentially what Gramsci describes as the modern prince.

Hagai Katz's work, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks," provides an interesting study, in which she tests the possibility of civil society networks acting together to form a new *historical bloc* and provide a counterhegemonic force. For a historic bloc to be successful it needs to establish a coalition of forces, which does not duplicate the existing ideology of the dominant structure. It must be a unifying, non-homogenizing and indigenizing strategy of resistance. Thus, anti-capitalist guerillas, NGOs, grassroots organizations, among other agencies must join forces in a unified strategy of resistance to create a counter-hegemonic historic bloc, which opposes the dominant global neo-liberal ideology.

Robert Cox's critical work in the 1980s has spawned a large body of relatively new material in International Relations. Expanding on Gramsci's ideas of the historical bloc, hegemony, and counter-hegemony, Neo-Gramscian theorists apply these concepts to the international arena. Gramsci's revolutionary concept of the historic bloc is the defining moment when the dominant norms and ideology are accepted by the subordinate classes as universally beneficial. The historic bloc cannot take place without the political and dominant leadership of the intellectual, who will lead the revolutionary party (modern prince) into a counter-hegemonic position. Neo-Gramscian theorists characterize hegemony in two distinct but

simultaneously occurring forms: hegemony based on consent and hegemony based on coercion. The latter is the distinctive characteristic of a dictatorship and predecessor to international instability. In Stephen Gill's speech to Yale University students, he discusses the United States as a hegemon, which can recently be distinguished as using supremacist strategies, and what Gill conceptualizes as *disciplinary neo-liberalism*. Utilizing Gramsci's ground-breaking theories and the vast amount of academic literature rooted in Gramscism, the following study will be dedicated to examining the Reagan Administration's role and ability to recapture the common sense of the American people, while ignoring international consent in the pursuit of US imperialism.

### **American Common Sense**

In Gramsci's *Study of Philosophy* (319-378), he makes an important distinction between the common sense of the masses and good sense. He sees the active man in the masses or the individual within the masses as having two theoretical consciousnesses; one which is implicit and sees itself as a member within the masses and the other, contradictory consciousness, as being superficial and inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed (Gramsci 333, 1971). The contradictory conscious forbids the self from any moral or political action and has been the dominant facet of the common sense within the American people. To fully grasp the concept of the common sense within American society and to demonstrate the inherited and uncritical contradictory consciousness of American society it is necessary to demonstrate liberalism at the center of the common sense through a few brief examples.

The turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marks a period in American history where we see the State's greatest increase in refining and shaping public opinion. The great majority of the electorate during this period, which was only about 20% of the total population, was uninformed rural working class with very little access to Presidential opinion and policy. Therefore, the President relied heavily on the "organic intellectuals", who were the educated urban elite, many of whom worked previously in Washington and carried an enormous amount of influence amongst their communities (Hunt 76, 2007). The "organic intellectuals" were responsible for diffusing the ideology of the times and the word of the President. As early as 1908, according to Hunt (2007, 76), Wilson recognizes the exponential importance of capturing the minds of the masses and forming the nation to his own views. This is crucial to Gramsci's theory of hegemony and forming the common sense of the people. It is at this moment when the "organic intellectuals" meld with the masses to share a common ideology and form a new historical bloc. We see this in periods through out American history; I would argue beginning with the Federalists; however, with McKinley and his "organic intellectuals" and even more importantly with Wilson, the need to form the liberal common sense within the contradictory consciousness of the American people was realized.

Fordism introduced a new society, which revolutionized not only the means of production, but also the way in which American society lives and thinks. Gramsci states in his discussion of Fordism, "Hegemony here is born in the factory

and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries” (Gramsci 1971, 285). Through various techniques of persuasion (high wages and social benefits) and subtle coercion (destruction of labor unions) Ford was able to create a new form of American worker, which embodied liberal ideology and value. By the 1920s, Ford’s efforts had seized the American mind, and the conquest of the European mind did not lag far behind. The Great Depression in 1929 slowed the progress of US hegemony and New Deal Keynesian economics made way for a more regulated capitalist economy. However, after all of the destruction and heartache of the Great Depression, liberal ideology stood strong in the center of the “common sense” of the American people.

### **The Rise and Fall of US Hegemony**

The end of World War II marks the United States’ great rise as the sole superpower and what Cox (1987, 211) defines as Pax Americana. It is in this period that the historical evolution of American manifest destiny and the internationalization of liberal ideology became a part of the American “common sense”. US liberal values and liberal means of production were imported internationally. The Marshall Plan made it possible for States to join the international economic order, while also introducing similar means of persuasion and coercion to the work force as Ford did decades earlier. In Germany for example, unions were constructed under the influence of US leadership (Cox 1987, 215). In 1946, Bretton Woods created the institutions of US hegemony. Debtor nations were now under the control of US economic policy and their leaders were the US’ ideological weapons. Furthermore, Cold War propaganda fueled anti-communist sentiment and liberal ideology. US hegemony grew progressively through the late 1940s and 1950s.

The 1960s marked a ripple in US hegemony. For Gramsci, a “crisis in hegemony” occurs when there is a separation between the social groups and political leaders of the time (Cox 1987, 273). In the 1960s we see an attempt from the developing world to join forces and separate themselves from US hegemony. Developing Nations in 1964 organized into the Group of 77 and demanded what they called a New International Economic Order. This New International Economic Order would have been largely based on a strong central government (Hunt 2007, 205). If the coalition was successful in bringing about a radical social transformation Gramsci would have defined this as the creation of a new historical bloc; however, the US retaliated with familiar techniques: persuasion and coercion. The US backed coups in Latin America and other developing nations, while sending large amounts of aid to the developing world (Augelli 1988, 87). Gramsci sees militarism as the loss of consent; thus, I would argue that President Johnson’s expansion in Vietnam demonstrates the US’ first great “crisis of hegemony” followed by the oil crisis along with the potential for the developing world, led by OPEC, to evolve into the US’ counter-hegemon. The 1979 oil crisis and the failure of the developing world to mend into a successful bloc lead us into the Reagan administration’s ability to dig into the common sense of the American people and to reestablish its global supremacy.

## Hegemony or Dominance: The Reagan Administration

When Ronald Reagan took office there was crisis amongst the American people. Economic crisis destroyed the American workers; the Vietnam War ruined the souls of the American people, and the possibility of nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union still lingered in the minds of most Americans. Ronald Reagan was not elected President of the United States because of his strong foreign policy; he was elected President because he represented the “common sense” of the American people. For those who were still worried about the possibility of nuclear war, he reassured the people of America’s historical destiny. For those out of work and the businessmen, he encouraged the people with his promise of liberal economics and confirmed to the businessmen the magic of the market. Further, he promised America his determination to fix internal problems no matter the costs.

Formally trained as a public speaker and actor, Reagan knew how to capture the hearts of the American people. According to Augelli (1988, 100), “Reagan’s strength as a political intellectual, his trick as a politician, has always been his ability to reflect the common sense of his audiences back to them.” Reagan reaffirmed their dreams and fears. He made them believe their dreams of economic elitism were attainable and their fears of Communism were realistic, but conquerable. What he did was merely unbury the historical contradictory consciousness of the American people. His ability to moralize the policy of the dominant social class, while convincing the subordinate classes to accept these policies defines him as an intellectual in the Gramscian sense.

Regan represents many aspects of the American “common sense”, but it was his dedication to liberalism and American destiny that influenced America. His cold war policy embodied both these aspects of the “common sense”. By fighting communism in the Soviet Union Reagan could defend liberalism and prove America’s destiny as the world’s crusader. In his years as President he fought vigorously to persuade workers to accept his liberal agenda attacking big labor and big government. He dismissed workers safety regulations as anti-market and appointed labor regulators who consistently ruled against unions on the same grounds (Augelli 1998, 103). Further, his “trickle down” economic policies resulted in massive tax cuts for the rich while increasing the national deficit. He denounced big government as anti-American; however, he increased the size of the government, mostly in its military expenditures. According to Hunt (2007, 254), “by 1985 the military budget was \$129 billion higher than it had been in 1979.” His anti-communist pro-democratic rhetoric was accepted as *quasi*-religious doctrine in the US; however, his policies were much different than what he was preaching at home. Therefore, in the following I argue that Reagan captured the American “common sense” under false pretenses and wielded great power through military occupation.

Chomsky (2003, 95-99) discusses in detail Reagan’s authorized covert operations against Nicaragua to repress its “totalitarian” regime and to replace it with a less pro-Soviet Union more pro-American government. Contradictory to his pro-democratic platform, in 1982 Reagan announced his support for El

Salvador's authoritarian, but pro-American government. These covert operations continued throughout the developing world in hopes to gain Cold War allies and contain soviet influence (Hunt 2007, 256). Reagan continued his anti-communist crusade by invading defenseless Grenada in October of 1983. This not only was used as a means of blocking alignment with Cuba, but as a means of breaking "Vietnam syndrome" at home. Grenada was a short decisive war victory that would put the fight back in the American people. Reagan did not stop at military intervention to reduce the Soviet threat. Reagan's international economic bullying through international organizations drove US ascendancy while leaving many countries behind. As discussed previously, Gramsci suggests that civil society acts as the glue between the dominant group and the subordinate. Therefore, the intellectuals within these organizations play the role of defining new bases for consent (Augelli 1988, 179). If the Reagan administration acted solely out of force within these organizations without achieving universal consent, its superiority would no longer be considered hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

Reagan used his power within IOs to make the IOs instruments of US policy. Organizations such as the World Bank and IMF began enforcing open market policies more thoroughly within the developing world, due to threats of pulling out of these organizations from the Reagan administration (Augelli 1988, 186). Furthermore, Reagan threatened to pull out of such organizations as the International Telecommunications Union, while withdrawing from UNESCO. Amongst many other acts of intimidation, the Reagan administration withheld dues from the UN in return for weighted voting based on financial contributions that gave the US great influence within the organization. While Reagan attempted to gain world superiority through intimidation techniques, he also bypassed the consent needed to create a new historic bloc and thus, hegemony.

For Gramsci, hegemony is based on a combination of consent and dominion. In essence, the subordinate classes are consenting to be dominated. "Organic Intellectuals", become the educators of the masses spreading the word of the ruling class and thus achieving the consent of the masses. In this study I argued that the "common sense" of the American people is based on two ideological concepts: liberalism and American destiny. These two ideas grew consistently throughout America's quest for dominance and were accepted not only in the US, but also throughout the globe. However, the economic crises of the 1970s combined with the Vietnam War resulted in a "crisis in hegemony" and the potential creation of a new historic bloc (developing world). Although this new historic bloc never took shape, the US lost considerable strength in global affairs. In 1981, Ronald Reagan, a protestant son of a petite bourgeois salesman was elected President. His demeanor embodied the "common sense" of the American people. He promised the ability of the free market and liberal policy to overcome the economic crisis and for American destiny to conquer the threat of communism. He successfully captured the contradictory consciousness of the American people, which prevented the masses from thinking autonomously.

While seizing the contradictory consciousness of the American people Reagan created an unmatched American military complex repressing any possible

communist threat in the developing world even if it meant backing repressive authoritative regimes. Furthermore, he used intimidation techniques to secure the US' spot as the sole economic influence within the UN and other international organizations. Therefore, the Regan administration achieved domestic hegemonic consent under false pretenses and achieved a level of international superiority through military and economic pressure defining the US as an imperial power not a hegemon in the Gramscian sense of the word.

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