

# ***FROM SILENCE TO SPEECH, DISRUPTING PATRIARCHY AND EXTREMISM: SUBALTERN RESISTANCE IN I AM MALALA***

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## ***Abstract***

*This article explores I Am Malala by Malala Yousafzai through the theoretical framework of Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony. It examines how Malala's memoir becomes a site of ideological resistance against dominant power structures such as patriarchy, religious extremism, and global political narratives. Through close textual analysis, the study highlights the ways in which Malala's personal experiences, educational advocacy, and international activism reflect a Gramscian counter-hegemonic consciousness. The paper argues that I Am Malala is not only a personal testimony of survival but also a cultural intervention that contests both local and global hegemonies. It illustrates how the subaltern voice, shaped by education, civil engagement, and strategic media use, can challenge systemic oppression and construct alternative ideological narratives.*

## ***Keywords***

*Malala Yousafzai; I Am Malala; Hegemony; Counter-hegemony; Antonio Gramsci; Subaltern; Resistance; Education; Feminism; Cultural Studies*

## ***1.1 Background of the Study***

To understand the structure of dominance and the mechanisms of resistance within any society, it is crucial to apply a theoretical framework that examines the exercise of power and the voice of opposition. Antonio Gramsci's (1971) concept of "cultural hegemony" argues that ruling powers secure control not only through force but also by manipulating intellectual and cultural institutions. The hegemonic class, according to Gramsci, asserts dominance by influencing belief systems, controlling media and religious discourse, and limiting intellectual freedom, often silencing authentic voices of marginalized communities.

This concept is exemplified in the Taliban's control over the Swat Valley in Pakistan, which was marked by ideological extremism, violence, and the deliberate silencing of female voices. Their control imposed a hegemonic order through intimidation, religious manipulation, and the suppression of girls' education, creating an atmosphere of fear and subjugation.

The emergence of subaltern discourses challenges such hegemonic structures. Subaltern studies value resistance from oppressed groups and bring attention to voices historically excluded from dominant narratives. *I Am Malala* (2013) by Malala Yousafzai is one such subaltern text that resists cultural and ideological domination. This memoir foregrounds the rights to education, political representation, and gender equality, directly opposing the Taliban's ideological framework.

This research employs Gramsci's theoretical framework to investigate how Malala's narrative challenges the ideological and religious hegemonies enforced by the Taliban. Her memoir is positioned within the context of postcolonial resistance literature, subaltern studies, and testimonial narratives that confront authoritarian power structures.

Gramsci's theory provides a lens through which to understand the nuanced ways in which hegemony functions—not merely as overt political dominance but as a system of internalized belief and “common sense” perpetuated through ideological institutions. As Forgacs (2000) explains, hegemony is sustained by aligning public consent with elite interests through cultural domination, propaganda, and intellectual manipulation. In such a system, voices of dissent are often drowned, and resistance becomes both intellectual and political.

Counter-hegemony, as described by Gramsci, occurs when marginalized or oppressed groups develop and propagate alternative ideologies that disrupt the dominant discourse. Hoare and Nowell-Smith (1971) argue that counter-hegemony can manifest through grassroots movements, revolutionary actions, or intellectual and cultural resistance. In the case of Swat, the Taliban's hegemony relied on controlling religious discourse, banning girls' education, and instilling fear. Malala Yousafzai's advocacy for girls' education and her public resistance exemplify a counter-hegemonic stance that challenged and eventually exposed the Taliban's ideological stronghold.

Postcolonial and subaltern theorists such as Spivak (1988) have emphasized that subaltern voices are often silenced or co-opted within dominant discourses. Malala's narrative, however, stands out as an instance where a subaltern voice breaks through the hegemonic boundaries and reaches global platforms. Her personal memoir serves not only as testimony but also as a form of political resistance.

Gramsci's theory has also been applied in the field of education, where scholars such as Apple (2004) argue that curricula and educational systems often reproduce ideological control. In Taliban-occupied Swat, education became a key battleground: schools were bombed, teachers were threatened, and girls were banned from attending. The Taliban used coercive measures and propaganda to enforce their ideological rule (Abbas, 2015; Bennett-Jones, 2014). Simultaneously, resistance emerged in the form of clandestine education efforts, local advocacy, and international solidarity, with Malala's campaign at the forefront.

Furthermore, Malala's activism resonates with global feminist resistance against gendered oppression. Mohanty (1988) critiques Western feminism's tendency to depict Third World women as passive victims and instead advocates recognizing localized feminist struggles. Malala's story reflects this—her resistance is deeply rooted in her local context yet speaks to global audiences, challenging both extremist patriarchy and homogenizing Western narratives.

The Taliban's rise in Swat from 2007 to 2009 provides a striking example of hegemony as theorized by Gramsci. Their ideological enforcement blended coercion with consent—using religious rhetoric, FM radio broadcasts, and public executions to maintain control (Shackle, 2019). Girls' schools, as symbols of Western influence, became prime targets of destruction (Bennett-Jones, 2014). Their hegemony rested not just on physical domination but on the psychological manipulation of the masses through religious and cultural symbols—closely resembling what Althusser (1971) described as “ideological state apparatuses.”

Malala's opposition to this regime—through blogging, speaking out, and writing her memoir—embodies counter-hegemonic resistance. Her father's support, particularly his belief in her right to education, further nurtured her voice. When Malala was attacked in 2012 for advocating girls' education, the global response further exposed the cruelty of Taliban hegemony and amplified her counter-narrative. Her memoir thus represents a unique example of a subaltern text that successfully disrupts hegemonic ideology and articulates a new vision of resistance.

Moreover, Malala exemplifies what Gramsci calls the “organic intellectual”—an individual from a marginalized class who rises to articulate collective concerns and challenge dominant ideologies (Forgacs, 2000). While the Taliban relied on religious dogma, media propaganda, and fear, Malala countered with narrative testimony, global alliances, and a passionate call for education as a fundamental human right.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

This study investigates how *I Am Malala* functions as a subaltern narrative of resistance using Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony. It examines how Malala challenges traditional power structures and ideological control in Swat by speaking out against the Taliban's extremist rule.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

- To investigate *I Am Malala* (2013) as a narrative of subaltern resistance through Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony.
- To explore how Malala's personal testimony challenges the Taliban's ideological control.
- To examine the roles of education, personal experience, and international activism in shaping a counter-hegemonic discourse.
- To understand how Malala's narrative empowers marginalized voices and critiques dominant sociopolitical structures.

## 1.4 Research Questions

- In what ways does *I Am Malala* serve as a narrative of subaltern resistance within Gramsci's theoretical framework?
- How does Malala's memoir critique the Taliban's hegemonic practices?

- What role do education, narrative, and activism play in generating counter-hegemonic discourse?
- How does Malala's story give voice to the marginalized and challenge dominant ideological narratives?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of postcolonial and subaltern studies by offering a Gramscian reading of Malala's memoir. Unlike existing studies that largely emphasize her activism, this research highlights the memoir as a narrative of ideological resistance. It also sheds light on the intersection of gender, power, and knowledge in contexts of political extremism and demonstrates how subaltern voices can influence global discourse.

### 1.6 Rationale of the Study

The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how ideological dominance operates in conflict-ridden regions like Swat and how personal narratives can challenge it. The Taliban's control over education and religious life in Swat is examined through the lens of Gramsci's theory. This theoretical framework helps bridge literary, political, and gender analyses, showing that education and personal experience can be tools for resistance.

### 1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in geographic scope, focusing only on the Swat Valley. While the issues discussed—ideological domination, gender-based oppression, and resistance—are globally relevant, the analysis remains grounded in the specific context of Swat. Furthermore, *I Am Malala* was published through Western media platforms, raising concerns about how representative it is of Pakistan's indigenous voices. The study also relies more on theoretical interpretation than on empirical fieldwork.

### Literature Review

This chapter explores scholarly perspectives on subalternity, ideological control, resistance, and education to frame *I Am Malala* as a counter-hegemonic narrative. While much literature engages with Malala's activism and global representation, this study uniquely applies Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony to her memoir. The following review situates this analysis within postcolonial, feminist, and educational discourses to identify the theoretical gap this research aims to address.

Husain (2015), in "Malala Yousafzai and the Politics of Girlhood," explores how Malala's early public image influenced global reception and affected how her activism was interpreted. The paper argues that while Malala was seen as a symbol of innocence and rebellion, her political agency was often masked. Husain suggests that global media, to justify their involvement, constructed a savior narrative in which Malala was cast as a passive subject rescued by the West, reinforcing orientalist myths about Muslim women.

Khoja-Moolji (2015), in "Producing Neoliberal Citizens," critically assesses how Malala's story

has been reshaped through a neoliberal lens. The author points out that global narratives frame Malala's independence through Western ideals without adequately addressing the systemic injustices in Pakistan that prevent girls from accessing education. This framing risks simplifying the socio-political complexities that Malala's story embodies.

Nayak (2016) highlights the global and legal aspects of the right to education in "Malala Yousafzai: A Study in Courage and the Right to Education." The author acknowledges Malala's courage and the visibility she brought to educational barriers in conflict zones but also analyzes the political and economic frameworks influencing her journey. Her activism is seen not just as personal resistance but as a broader call for educational reforms.

Ahmed (2014) discusses the political utility of Malala's media portrayal in "Malala Yousafzai and the Politics of Representation." The article critiques how Malala is often depicted as a symbol of development in line with Western interpretations of Muslim women's oppression. Ahmed argues this can overshadow local efforts in Pakistan and dilute the complexity of Malala's cultural and political identity.

Zia (2015), in "Malala Yousafzai and the Politics of Symbolism," explores Malala's narrative in the context of global feminist and human rights discourses. She critiques how her story is appropriated by political players and media while also analyzing the mixed reactions within Pakistan—ranging from admiration to skepticism. Zia highlights the intricate interplay of gender, politics, and patriotism.

Butler (2015) evaluates Malala's story using feminist theory in "Malala and the Politics of Gender and Education." She critiques liberal feminist narratives that emphasize individual resilience while ignoring structural issues like poverty, colonial histories, and global power relations. Butler sees Malala's activism as intersecting both individual agency and collective struggle.

Khan (2014), in "The Malala Phenomenon," examines reactions within Pakistani society to Malala's story, noting that it became controversial due to postcolonial sensitivities. Her portrayal in the Western media was seen by some as reinforcing foreign agendas. Khan shows how the shifting narratives influenced public perceptions of education and gender within Pakistan.

Fominaya (2017), in "Social Movements and Counter-Hegemony in the Digital Age," argues that digital technologies enable global resistance to hegemonic narratives. Through movements like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, counter-narratives challenge dominant ideologies. Though not focused solely on Malala, this study emphasizes the importance of media and networking in modern counter-hegemonic activism.

Sajid (2016) celebrates Malala as a symbol of resistance in "Malala Yousafzai: A Symbol of Resistance and Hope." The paper emphasizes the transformative power of education and notes the founding of the Malala Fund. It also addresses criticism Malala has faced within traditional communities, questioning whether her story aids or complicates local educational reforms.



Rashid (2015), in "Malala Yousafzai and the Global Struggle for Girls' Education," highlights how Malala catalyzed global movements and support for girls' education. While praising her contributions, the study also explores whether her international prominence overshadowed the efforts of local activists.

Thomas (2019), in "Neoliberalism and the Crisis of Hegemony," uses Gramsci's lens to examine how cultural and intellectual institutions—particularly media and education—sustain elite control. He emphasizes the need to question these institutions to foster counter-hegemonic thinking.

Morton (2020), in "Transnational Hegemony and Global Governance," expands Gramsci's theory to international structures. He argues that transnational power patterns require equally globalized counter-hegemonic responses.

Curran and Couldry (2019), in "Media and Hegemony," explore how digital media can serve as a platform for counter-hegemonic speech. They emphasize the rise of independent publications as a way to challenge dominant narratives.

Fuchs (2020), in "Social Media and the Crisis of Hegemony," asserts that platforms like Twitter and Facebook can contest ideological power when used for critical discourse. He stresses the importance of media literacy in resisting hegemony.

Giroux (2018), in "Education and the Crisis of Hegemony," critiques how neoliberal ideologies influence educational institutions. He advocates for socially responsible education that fosters critical thinking and challenges dominant narratives.

Apple (2021), in "Counter-Hegemonic Education in Neoliberal Times," provides models for resisting dominant ideologies through education. He promotes learning grounded in social justice and real-world community engagement.

Laclau and Mouffe (2017), in "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy," broaden Gramsci's theory beyond class struggle, applying it to race, gender, and sexuality. They argue that counter-hegemonic efforts must include diverse social movements.

Despite the extensive discourse around Malala's activism, relatively few studies apply Gramsci's framework to her memoir as a resistance text. Much of the existing research emphasizes her symbolic value or critiques her global reception, without deeply analyzing how her narrative confronts hegemonic structures. This study addresses that gap by treating *I Am Malala* as a site of ideological contestation that resists both local and global power discourses through personal storytelling, education, and counter-narratives.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in close textual analysis to examine *I Am Malala* through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Textual analysis is particularly well-suited for this inquiry, as it facilitates a nuanced exploration of how the memoir constructs ideological resistance and navigates power structures. Gramsci's concepts

of cultural dominance, organic intellectuals, and ideological struggle offer a robust framework for interpreting the memoir's narrative techniques and sociopolitical positioning.

The primary text for this research is *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb, chosen for its global significance and thematic engagement with gender, education, and resistance. Secondary sources include academic literature on postcolonial theory, feminist criticism, education policy, and Gramscian political philosophy. Together, these sources support a comprehensive understanding of the memoir's engagement with dominant ideologies. The inclusion of postcolonial feminist perspectives further enhances the analysis by addressing the gendered dimensions of subalternity and voice.

Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring patterns related to hegemony, counter-narrative, and narrative agency. Key categories include representations of institutional power (especially Taliban control), forms of counter-hegemonic resistance (Malala's advocacy and activism), and the narrative's framing of these conflicts. Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" is particularly relevant in interpreting how Malala and her father challenge ideological authority through education and public discourse. The research thus situates the memoir within broader global struggles over power, identity, and cultural resistance.

### Analysis

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony provides a critical lens for analyzing the power dynamics and resistance portrayed in *I Am Malala*. Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, theorized that the ruling class maintains dominance not merely through coercive means but through cultural institutions that manufacture consent. Hegemony, in his view, involves a process by which dominant groups project their worldview in such a way that it becomes accepted as common sense by the rest of society. This domination occurs not solely through politics or economics, but also through educational institutions, religious discourse, media narratives, and family structures. Counter-hegemony, on the other hand, arises when subordinate groups construct and disseminate alternative ideologies, challenging the status quo and seeking to disrupt existing power relations. These counter-hegemonic movements originate within civil society, from spaces that encourage dialogue, education, and social engagement. This theoretical framework is particularly effective in interpreting Malala Yousafzai's memoir, which documents a young girl's confrontation with multiple layers of hegemony—from local patriarchal norms and militant religious extremism to global narratives of development and humanitarianism. Her narrative is not just a testimony of survival; it is a consciously constructed text of resistance. Through speech, writing, schooling, and activism, Malala participates in the long Gramscian tradition of challenging dominant ideologies. *I Am Malala* does more than chronicle oppression; it becomes a vehicle for mobilizing thought, questioning power structures, and asserting subaltern agency. It reveals how education, literacy, and the power of voice serve as radical tools to reclaim intellectual and cultural autonomy within both national and transnational contexts. Her experiences intersect with broader ideological and political shifts, demonstrating how resistance can emerge from individual consciousness, familial support, and communal solidarity. Thus, the memoir provides fertile ground to apply Gramsci's insights and assess how counter-hegemonic forces evolve from the margins. The prologue sets the tone for this ideological conflict, not simply through a narrative of trauma but by contextualizing the symbolic confrontation between individual agency and authoritarian repression. Malala's recollection of her homeland—"the hum of the bazaar," "unmade bed," and her friend's secret knocks—represents more than nostalgia; it reflects a

sociocultural landscape being gradually reshaped by ideological coercion (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 3). This opening sequence subtly contrasts communal harmony with the intrusive terror of fundamentalism. The Taliban's attempt on her life, punctuated by the question, "Who is Malala?" (p. 15), crystallizes the tension between hegemonic silencing and subaltern assertion. The fact that this violent act was carried out on a school bus—a space associated with learning and future aspirations—further underlines the symbolic assault on education as a form of resistance. Gramsci emphasized the importance of educational and cultural spaces as battlegrounds for ideological contestation; this episode demonstrates how violently hegemonic systems attempt to eliminate emerging threats from these spaces. In this early portion of the memoir, the personal seamlessly merges with the political. Her father's gentle inquiry—"How was the school running today?" (p. 4)—and the playful remark about her becoming prime minister (p. 8) are not incidental; they constitute small acts of ideological defiance in a context where traditional gender roles and clerical authority stifle ambition. These domestic spaces function as early incubators of counter-hegemonic thought, challenging the state-sponsored and clerical indoctrination that later follows. Through these intimate exchanges, the narrative demonstrates that counter-hegemony is cultivated long before overt political action. It begins with conversation, familial encouragement, and the refusal to submit to normalized oppression. Malala's narrative continues to reflect this resistance in increasingly conscious and deliberate ways. Even prior to the Taliban's formal takeover of Swat, the ideological landscape of the region was shaped by deeply entrenched patriarchal and religious values. Malala's observation that girls are "hidden away behind a curtain" (p. 13) exposes the everyday normalcy of gender-based exclusion. This normalization of patriarchy through tradition and religion illustrates how hegemony, according to Gramsci, embeds itself within the social fabric until its logic is rarely questioned. Clerics who deemed girls' education "un-Islamic" were not isolated actors but agents in a broader ideological campaign that conflated religiosity with control over women's agency. However, in this climate of oppression, Ziauddin Yousafzai emerges as a beacon of resistance. His work as an educator and activist aligns closely with Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual"—someone who arises from within a marginalized group and challenges prevailing power through thought, leadership, and community building. He not only teaches but creates a space where questioning becomes part of learning. His speeches, school management, and defense of female education disrupt the cultural consensus imposed by both clerics and local customs. By teaching that "we are all equal before the law" and that "a girl's education is not a sin," he redefines what is deemed acceptable within the moral and cultural structure of society. Malala, nurtured in this counter-hegemonic environment, begins to voice her resistance. Her questioning—"Why should I be afraid? You should speak even if you are just one voice" (p. 57)—signifies the birth of a political subjectivity that understands the weight of speech in an environment of silence. This line reflects the Gramscian notion that every human is a philosopher, capable of contributing to the intellectual and cultural evolution of society. Malala's defiance is not born in isolation but is the result of pedagogical intervention within a space designed to resist the hegemony of silence and submission. Her early resistance is thus both personal and ideological, forged in the interplay between her home, her school, and her social context.



Moreover, Malala's development reveals the layered nature of ideological transformation. It is not enough to resist outward oppression; one must also unlearn internalized beliefs. Her narrative reveals moments of personal introspection where she navigates the conflict between religious identity and educational aspiration. In doing so, she exemplifies Gramsci's idea of "contradictory consciousness"—where one simultaneously holds beliefs aligned with and opposed to dominant ideology. The evolution of her thinking—from passive acceptance to active resistance—illustrates the transformative potential of counter-hegemonic education rooted in critical consciousness. This inner shift underscores how the subaltern does not simply emerge in opposition to power, but through sustained intellectual and emotional labor.

In chapters like "Dreams" and "Magic Pencil," Malala's imagination and aspirations become forms of ideological resistance. Her wish for a magical pencil to "draw a proper school where girls could study freely" (p. 39) transitions into the belief that "my voice could be more powerful than any magic pencil" (p. 42). This marks the shift from fantasy to action—an internalization of Gramsci's notion that change occurs not through revolt alone, but through the production of critical consciousness and alternative cultural narratives. Her bravery, shaped by her father's assertion that "Bravery is when you refuse to be afraid" (p. 27), illustrates Gramsci's idea of "dual consciousness"—where subordinated individuals simultaneously internalize and resist dominant ideologies.

The 2005 earthquake provided an opportunity for hegemonic forces to gain consent through service. While the state faltered in response, religious groups like the TNSM stepped in, gaining ideological capital. The mullahs interpreted the disaster as divine punishment and used fear to promote Sharia law (p. 30). According to Gramsci, hegemonic structures often assert dominance by exploiting social crises. Ziauddin resisted this encroachment, turning his school into a sanctuary, both physically and intellectually. His institution became a site of "war of position," where cultural resistance is nurtured within civil society against dominant ideological institutions.

The rise of "Radio Mullah" further intensified ideological control. Fazlullah's broadcasts banned music, enforced gender segregation, and weaponized religion. These actions reflect Gramsci's insight that mass media and religion often serve hegemonic purposes. Ziauddin's defiant stance—"No Radio Mullah will tell me what to do" (p. 39)—rejects religious dogma imposed as state ideology. His home, filled with books and debates on Newton and Rumi (p. 43), becomes a counter-hegemonic space. Gramsci's view of civil society as a battleground for competing ideologies is exemplified in the Yousafzais' household, where rational inquiry contests blind obedience. The Taliban's media outreach parallels modern authoritarian regimes that utilize technology and language to shape public perception—highlighting Gramsci's belief in the strategic control of cultural production. As threats escalated, Malala's activism grew more public. Despite death threats, she refused to retreat. Her BBC blog, anonymous at first, gave voice to the voiceless—an act Gramsci would describe as the intervention of the organic intellectual who speaks from and for the oppressed. Her line—"The Taliban tried to silence us, but I found a way to speak" (p. 105)—shows resistance through the written word. By presenting herself as both an individual and a representative of a larger struggle, she illustrates Gramsci's belief that counter-hegemonic movements must unite personal and collective consciousness.

Malala's confrontation with patriarchal extremism intensified as schools were bombed and fear spread. Yet, community-led secret schools exemplify how civil society can resist hegemonic collapse by sustaining alternative institutions. Malala's assertion—"Education is our right, just as it is the right of every boy" (p. 55)—directly counters the Taliban's patriarchal ideology. Her rejection of peace deals as fragile (p. 120) reflects Gramsci's idea of "passive revolution," where apparent reforms serve to preserve dominant power under the guise of change. This underscores how dominant powers adapt to crisis by reshaping ideology just enough to neutralize dissent, without shifting structural control. These political compromises often suppress real systemic change, reinforcing Gramsci's assertion that transformative resistance must stem from ideological conviction, not convenience.

Malala's use of global platforms also reflects what Gramsci would describe as counter-hegemonic internationalism. She crosses boundaries of culture and geography while maintaining ideological consistency. Her appeals to the United Nations and her Nobel Peace Prize speech do not reject her identity as a Pashtun Muslim girl, but rather assert it within the discourse of universal rights. This reflects a synthesis of local struggle and global solidarity, where the subaltern reclaims voice within hegemonic frameworks. Her insistence on representing girls in developing nations on global stages challenges cultural hierarchies and brings visibility to invisible voices—echoing Gramsci's belief that the oppressed must construct their own cultural narratives. Her speeches, school campaigns, and media presence not only dismantle cultural myths about Muslim girls but challenge the global community to take structural responsibility.

After her displacement—"We had to leave everything behind" (p. 125)—Malala's activism entered a transnational phase. In Birmingham, ideological conflict persisted, but so did her voice. Her statement—"The Taliban's threats were still there, but I felt safe" (p. 225)—indicates that exile provided physical security but not ideological detachment. Through global speeches and the Malala Fund, she advanced counter-hegemonic discourse internationally. Her declaration—"The one thing we all know is that education is the key to change" (p. 260)—expands Gramsci's idea of cultural transformation as the pathway to structural change. In Gramsci's framework, this reflects a successful translation of resistance from civil society to political influence. Her memoir thus serves as a narrative weapon in the ongoing ideological struggle against both local extremism and global structural inequalities.

*I Am Malala* exemplifies how counter-hegemony is forged through education, civil resistance, media, and intellectual engagement. Gramsci's theory reveals how Malala's voice rises from the subaltern to challenge systems of power that rely on coercion, cultural domination, and ideological manipulation. Her memoir does not merely recount survival; it reconstructs resistance as a global, intellectual, and moral struggle that begins in the margins but reaches across the world.

As Malala declares, “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world” (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013, p. 262), she encapsulates the transformative power of education and discourse that Gramsci believed essential for dismantling hegemonic systems. When she affirms, “We realize the importance of our voices only when we are silenced” (p. 150), she highlights the dialectic of suppression and empowerment, showing that attempts to silence the subaltern often intensify their will to speak. Her statement, “They thought that the bullets would silence us, but they failed... and then, out of that silence came thousands of voices” (p. 261), powerfully aligns with Gramsci’s belief that resistance, once awakened, has the power to ignite mass consciousness.

Malala’s story affirms that the subaltern can speak—not just locally, but powerfully, globally, and politically, when equipped with education and strategic discourse. Her memoir thus becomes a living example of counter-hegemonic intervention, one that continues to inspire and instruct in the ongoing struggle against ideological oppression.

## Conclusion

The analysis of *I Am Malala* through the lens of Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony reveals the memoir as a powerful narrative of resistance that challenges both local and global structures of domination. Malala Yousafzai’s story is not only a personal testimony but also a deliberate ideological engagement with forces of religious extremism, patriarchal oppression, and state negligence. Her activism, rooted in education and civil discourse, exemplifies the emergence of an organic intellectual who transforms private suffering into public resistance.

Gramsci’s notion that hegemonic power is maintained through cultural and intellectual domination—and not merely through force—helps contextualize how the Taliban’s ideological control extended into everyday life in Swat. Through propaganda, fear, and appeals to distorted religious values, the Taliban succeeded in imposing a cultural narrative that discouraged dissent, particularly from women and children. However, Malala’s insistence on education and her father’s unwavering efforts to keep his school open acted as counter-hegemonic practices that resisted this domination from within civil society.

The memoir also demonstrates how counter-hegemonic struggle is not linear but evolves in response to shifting power structures. From anonymous blogging to international speeches, Malala’s resistance grows more vocal and visible, reflecting Gramsci’s idea of the “war of position”—a long-term ideological battle fought within institutions, families, and public discourse. Even after facing life-threatening violence, Malala’s commitment to education and her use of media as a tool of empowerment illustrate how subaltern voices can challenge dominant narratives. Furthermore, *I Am Malala* disrupts the traditional framing of subaltern subjects as voiceless. Through this text, Malala reclaims authorship over her life story and reframes her identity as a Pashtun, a Muslim, and a girl, not as a passive victim but as a conscious agent of change. The memoir becomes a site where the subaltern not only speaks but is heard, understood, and responded to across global platforms. In doing so, Malala’s voice challenges the boundaries that often confine the subaltern within silence or simplified representations.

Gramsci's emphasis on the role of education, language, and cultural institutions in shaping consciousness finds powerful expression in Malala's journey. Her assertion that "education is the key to change" becomes more than a slogan; it is an embodiment of counter-hegemonic strategy, where literacy and knowledge become tools to dismantle ideological conformity. Her resistance is not only symbolic but structural—targeting the roots of systemic inequality and demanding transformation at the level of policy and practice.

In conclusion, *I Am Malala* is a memoir that functions simultaneously as personal narrative and political manifesto. It illustrates how a young girl from a marginalized region can rise to challenge the ideological dominance of violent patriarchy through education and self-expression. Gramsci's theory enables a deeper understanding of how hegemony operates subtly through consent, and how counter-hegemonic voices like Malala's can disrupt it with courage, intellect, and strategic activism. The text affirms that resistance is possible—and necessary—when the subaltern not only speaks but mobilizes, educates, and inspires collective consciousness across borders.

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