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**RESEARCH PAPER****Socio-Political Power Relations in Mohsin's *Between You, Me And The Four Walls*: A Marxist Critique****<sup>1</sup>Fahim Wakeel and <sup>2</sup>Farkhanda Shahid Khan\***

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**ABSTRACT**

The article provides a Marxist critique of Moni Mohsin's novel, *Between You, Me, and The Four Walls*, by employing an intersectional framework of Marxist and Cultural theories comprising Raymond William's Cultural theory, Gramsci's Hegemony, and Althusser's Ideology. This research argues that Mohsin's selected narrative involves a complex interplay of ideology, hegemony, and culture to manifest the complexities of social, economic, and political power relations in the context of Pakistan. In order to construct a persuasive document of human history and social change, the rationale of this research is to expose Pakistani culture and society where Hegemony and Ideological State Apparatuses work to create further dichotomy and class faction among people. Furthermore, by discussing the features like democracy, ideology and hegemony-responsible for the creation of a conventional culture, the work reveals simplified yet unusual representation of native culture and society. The article also challenges the diverse inherent notions of military and politics that are responsible in shaping culture(s), ideologies and creating hegemony among the people. Thus, this research concludes that the complex interplay of ideology, hegemony, and culture in Mohsin's novel unveils the power dynamics in Pakistani society and encourages critical thinking and self-reflection towards constructing a fair and just society.

**KEYWORDS**

Culture, Democracy, Hegemony, Ideology, ISAs, Marxism, Politics, Power, RSAs, Socio-political

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**Introduction**

This paper focuses on Marxist critique of Moni Mohsin's novel, *Between You, Me, and The Four Walls* (2022), by employing an integrated framework of Marxist and Cultural theories comprising Raymond William's Cultural theory, Gramsci's Hegemony, and Althusser's Ideology. The article explores how culture, ideology, and hegemony pave the way for social, political, and economic power relations in the context of Pakistan. This article is significant since it discusses common culture, ideological state apparatuses and hegemony and their role in creating class differences, class struggles, and constant disputes among native people of Pakistan. Theoretical concepts of Raymond Williams' cultural theory, Althusser's Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses and Gramsci's Hegemony are used to analyze the subject matter of this study.

Contemporary Anglophone Pakistani literature focuses on themes of Pakistani society, politics, religion and culture in wide-range. Moni Mohsin also discusses contemporary issues, culture, politics and history of Pakistani society in her novels. This

paper majorly concentrates on her latest novel *Between You, Me, and The Four Walls* (2022) and incidents discussed in it regarding Pakistani society and politics.

This paper inculcates three different Marxist theorists and their thoughts into an integrated framework to use them as a lens to analyse the selected novel. Williams is best known for his exploration of the relationship between culture, society, and politics, particularly in his seminal work *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, first published in 1958. He examines how dominant ideologies are perpetuated and maintained through cultural practices and institutions, such as education, media, and the arts. Louis Althusser (1918–1990) made significant contributions to Marxist theory, particularly in the fields of philosophy, politics, and ideology. His concepts of Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) play a significant part in the analysis of this text. Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), who was an Italian activist, Marxist philosopher, and political theorist is particularly known for his ideas of hegemony and analysis of cultural and political power structures in the capitalist societies.

### Literature Review

*Between You Me and The Four Walls* is quite new work by Moni Mohsin that is the reason there are no previous research available for reviewing the literature. Moni Mohsin's compositions consisting of both fictional and non-fictional works demonstrate a thoughtful realization and obligation to the multiplicity and vastly appreciated cultural heritage of Pakistan, which arranges the initial and central plank of almost all her creative production. Her four novels consisting of diary entries and other novels discuss issues related to Pakistan, "therefore the Butterfly Diaries acts as a medium where the private and the public intermingle" (Laskar, 2022).

Afzaal, Zahoor and Sajid (2023) offer a critique of Moni Mohsin's book, *The End of Innocence* (2007) while illustrating the friendship between nine-year-old girl Laila and a teenage girl, Rani, involved in extramarital relationship. Afzaal et.al (2023) analyzes perspectives of subaltern voices in the novel. This book is considered as an allegory to the development of Pakistan as a nation during the 1971 war. Afzaal et.al (2023) explores the stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity that are present in such societies and it also sheds light on how women are socialized in patriarchal societies (Afzaal, Zahoor and Sajid, 2023). Further, these researchers examine how female gender is being portrayed in Pakistani literature and media.

Azeem, Amin and Saleem (2023) concentrate on *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008) and discuss important events which brought a long-term and undesirable change in Pakistan's modern historical era. It covers some selected unpredictable years in Pakistan's development, from 2001 to 2008, including 9/11, its consequences for Pakistan and its place in both domestic and global politics, cultural exchanges, the media revolution in Pakistan, and the role of women in this revolution. She discusses, Benazir Bhutto, a prominent female political leader who is currently occupying the political field (Mohsin, p. 209) despite the fact that this particular field is associated to patriarchy. She also mentions South Asian female writers who achieved international recognition, such as Sara Suleri (p.128) and Arundhati Roy (p.56). Azeem et al. (2023) emphasizes Mohsin's attempts to broaden the horizons of Chick Lit genre by incorporating local Pakistani sensibilities. Chick Lit is considered "a form of popular literature (largely) written by women for a female audience" (Ferriss & Young, 2006, p. 12).

Mehvish Riaz (2022) highlights linguistic creativity – another important aspect in Mohsin's works-- in the form of new words and unique linguistic structures intended to create humor and mocking social practices. It demonstrates how inventive English

communication by Pakistani writers is fostering the development of a regional vernacular. *Duty Free* is a novel that combines societal satire and a woman's diary genre. Riaz distinguishes that it uses seven deviation forms proposed by Geoffrey N. Leech (1969). Similar to Riaz, Anwar, Abbas & Rizwan (2023) analyzed the language used in the novel *Duty Free*, which includes intentional spelling and grammatical errors, as well as frequent use of malapropism and code-switching. In similar vein, Sucharita Sarkar (2016) explores how Mohsin uses comic tropes such as the stupid socialite, malapropism, and urban upper class drawing room intrigues to criticize the social realities and inconsistencies of contemporary Pakistan.

Mohsin deftly weaves the social comedy of manners that results from such a mismatch and such an unusual group of characters, which accounts for a large portion of the four volumes of humor. The focus of political satire, nevertheless, is the contact that occurs between Butterfly's glamorous bubble and the external reality of Pakistan, where a complex web of durable but shifting relationships fasten the bubble. Mohsin writes in *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2009), "I have also tried to include...the bigger events of our times that have reverberated even in the life of one as coddled as Butterfly...[including] the larger socio-political trends of recent years" (Mohsin, p.226).

After going through the previous research conducted on topics like the 1971 war perspective mainly by Afzaal, Zahoor, & Sajid, (2023), on gender and reverse gender roles by Aftab, Shaheen, & Aslam (2021) and by Razzaq, & Hashmi (2022), on chick literature by Azeem, Amin & Saleem. (2023), on linguistic creativity and of language by Riaz (2022), the researcher has found that there is no research concerning Intersectional - Marxist analysis on this novel. There is quite sufficient research available in the context of the structure of the novels written by Moni Mohsin for example by Sarkar (2016) who identifies satire, and humor from diaries. There is also satisfactory research on language used by Mohsin e.g. code switching and poor language. As far as *Between You Me and Four Walls* is concerned, it has remained unexplored therefore providing a gap in the present research. In the following research, there are a lot of instances where socio-political power relations are explored. Consequently, the application of an integrated theory fills this gap by distinguishing elements of ideology, hegemony and culture.

## Material and Methods

This qualitative study uses the concepts taken from cultural and Marxist theories selected from their relevant books, i.e. *Culture and Society* (1958) by Raymond Williams; *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (1971), edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith; and *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (1971) by Louis Althusser. To understand the socio-political power relations in *Between You Me and Four Walls* by Moni Mohsin, all these significant books provide a framework to be analyzed by using the method of textual analysis. These integrated aspects of diverse theorists, help to investigate how culture both reflects and influences society, with a focus on the dynamic relations between dominant and residual cultural practices. Through this perspective, we look at how characters in the novel deal with cultural and power dynamics, and societal standards.

## Raymond Williams' Culture

Raymond Williams (1983) explores the intersection of Marxism and culture in his examination of how economic and social structures shape cultural forms and practices. Marxism and culture interact but this interaction can be understood as soon as organizing forces of the economic element are recognized (Williams, 1983, p.287). Williams examines how different social classes engage and contribute to the culture, and highlighting the ways

in “which a culture is woven, and by following which a culture is to be understood” (Williams, 1983, p.288) also support us to locate the cultural elements within the selected text. His examination of the roles of cultural practices and institution (such as mass media, and the arts) in perpetuating and making ideologies dominant is also significant to analyze the ruling ideologies in Pakistan as depicted in Mohsin’s novel.

### **Louis Althusser’s Ideology**

Louis Althusser, a renowned French philosopher and professor of philosophy, propounded his concept of ideology. According to Althusser (1971), “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals”, “to the real world; the thing ideology (mis) represents itself already at one remove from the real” (Lenin, p.119). Apparatuses for Ideology and Repression in Statecraft were terms he first used in 1971's *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Althusser argues that Ideological State Apparatuses (used later as ISAs in this research) like schools, news outlets, and churches are vital to preserve the current social order because they spread ideas that benefit the ruling class. By molding people's views, these establishments ensure that the ruling class's ideology will endure.

The term Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) refers to a set of truths that are readily apparent to the unaided eye and take the shape of unique establishments. Althusser (2006) has compiled some ISAs which are; “the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA, the cultural ISA” (Althusser, 2006, p.143) and some RSAs like police and military. An actual difference between them is that, “the Repressive State Apparatuses function 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function by ideology” (Althusser, 2006, p.145).

### **Antonio Gramsci’s Hegemony**

Gramsci was a vigorous labor leader, chosen to the Parliament of Italy and the Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, only to be imprisoned by Mussolini from 1926-37 (Litowitz, 2000, p.518). However, during his imprisonment, he formed an immensely persuasive series of different essays retrospectively accumulated as *The Prison Notebooks*. Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony is a central component of his broader theory of cultural and political analysis. For better comprehension of hegemony, Gramsci gives a compact definition;

“[t]he “spontaneous consent” given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically caused” by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.” (Gramsci, 1971, p.12-13).

Gramsci describes two forms of control; one is consent and the other is physical force. This two-dimension system is the so-called “centaur” or half-man, half-beast, about which Gramsci wrote – one that also has two sides; state side and civil society. In this way, Antonio Gramsci stressed the importance of cultural hegemony in sustaining political and social power.

### **Triangulated Thoughts**

Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci’s concepts on culture, ideology, hegemony and sociopolitical power relations have contributed to develop an integrated theoretical framework to analyze present text. With the help of this theoretical triangle which starts from a culture, becomes an ideology and then turns into hegemony,

we observe sociopolitical power relations in *Between You, Me, and the Four Walls* by Moni Mohsin. This framework highlights that culture itself is a dynamic concept and leads toward making ideologies (in the form of state apparatuses whether repressive or ideological) that different influential groups adopt and after an appropriate alteration change into hegemony. These political and social hegemonies lead toward the supremacy of the upper classes and subjugation of the lower classes. In addition, this framework works as a tool to grasp inherent ideologies and hegemonies behind the politics of a country (especially, Pakistan), (inter) national relations, and (mis) use of state powers. These integrated aspects work as a whole to highlight the power dynamics between culture and politics, calling for a more sophisticated analysis of cultural practices and their roles in the maintenance and change of existing social and political systems in Pakistan in the selected novel.

## Results and Discussion

### Moni Mohsin's Perspective on the Politics of Pakistan

In *Between You, Me, and The Four Walls* (2022), Mohsin highlights extreme polarization- a common political culture among both the elite and the middle classes. Butterfly discusses the cognitive state of political leaders and their followers. If they like someone, they blindly praise them and cannot judge them, and a similar happens when they dislike someone. She alludes political unrest of 2014 when Imran Khan (later written as IK), a political leader and former cricket captain of Pakistan, led a protest against the government of that time. Butterfly comments, "what's happened to Imran? Every day new tamasha, every day new stunt. Kbhi dharna against drones, tau kbhi jalsa against election" (Mohsin, 2022, p.9). By stating this, she shows her concern regarding wretched political approach of IK. She recommends him, "to go to his province and run the government instead of marching around like Forest Bump" (Mohsin, 2022, p.9). Raju Das (2019) discusses in this regard that a common political approach that working class cannot dominate themselves except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes (Marx, 1871b). IK made that party which is in opposition to every other party but the dilemma is that working/middle class of Pakistan are still being exploited instead of getting domination. Mohsin considers IK responsible for deterioration in the country which turned people into a dogmatic society. These political conditions directly oppose the thoughts of Raymond Williams 'regarding laissez-faire society' (Williams, 1983, p.27) which advises a government to work for the benefit of the people.

Butterfly considers IK a hypocrite because instead of accepting defeat, he brought the public into a Dharna (strike) and hijacked Islamabad. In the contemporary era, IK promoted the culture of claiming rigging in lost elections. Marx and Engels (1848) state in this regard that "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 82). It conveys that the government of a capitalist state works for the bourgeoisie class-- the owners of the means of production. Further, it displays how the state's executive works, and its policies, and decisions are aimed at exercising and preserving the control of this state's economically dominant class. Although, IK was not a part of government but he possessed power of masses. Despite being against the terrorist activities in the country, his stance regarding the Taliban has been contradictory because he supports them and wants to shelter them. As butterfly mentions, "Hadn't he eaten up our ears about how instead of fighting them, we must embrace them as our own brothers and talk to them heart to heart?" (Mohsin, p.3).

Moreover, IK's dharna acts as a political force, yet this political force acts not to bring a genuine revolution but to distort democracy further. These dharnas have left democracy which Marx terms as "fragmented and weak" (Das, 2019, p. 2).

Muloo, one of Butterfly's friends also attends this dharna and like most of the people she also perceives it as more of an enjoyment than a strike. During the dharna, they used to go for shopping, lived in a luxury hotel, and attended dharna for the first week. These circumstances display the absence of seriousness of this event, and indeed it was party time (Mohsin, 2022, p.19). In an article entitled, 'Adventurism', Lenin (1914) says: 'When Marxists say that certain groups, are adventurist, they have in mind the very definite and specific social and historical features of a phenomenon... [There are] tiny groups, which ... spring ... up for an hour, for several months, with no roots whatever among the masses (and politics without the masses are adventurist politics), and with no serious and stable principles (Lenin, 1914). Those who lived there for four months were tiny groups as discussed by Lenin (1914), one was affluent; which had nothing to do with the economic and political conditions of Pakistan and the other class consisted those people who were receiving daily wages just to sit and listen to IK for the whole day. They had no stable agendas except adventure. In the work, *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse describes these conditions as social realities that support fascism instead of focusing on the perceptive and economic causes. He further states that "The preconditions for fascism are present whenever a democratic state is put into the service of an economic system that conflicts with the vital needs of the majority of its people" (Marcuse, 1964, p. 55). Correspondingly, the vital needs of the people were ignored in IK's Dharna as well. Establishment of democracy, decrease in inflation, eradication of corruption, better educational system and lack of law and order which were slogans of IK were completely ignored in reality. Thus, the revolution that was started for democracy ended in fascism. Carrying her arguments further Mohsin says;

"After all that tamasha, that four-month-long circus with DJ's and dancing and dhols, that toofan-e-badtameezi, the stupid shriek speeches from top of containers, the raid on PTV office, the weeks of missed schools for Islamabad children, the people killed, Imran is still not a king of Pakistan" (Mohsin, 2022, p.25).

This excerpt from the novel states that dharna gave nothing but mere disturbance, tumult and riot all over the country. Supporters of this protest demolished the basic essence of law and order by attacking national TV office. In addition, due to deteriorated conditions, schools remained closed in the capital. Indeed, it was a misuse of people's power. Mohsin blatantly condemned this negative political culture which was destroying the peace of the whole nation. Raju Das (2019) discusses that political economy of Marx gives many reasons as to why capitalism must be gotten rid of, such as: income and wealth inequality; unemployment; poverty; capitalist crises creating constant instability in economic life; etc. These reasons are as valid now as they were during his own time (Das, 2019). This is how this dharna proves to be a shallow and aimless act because it did not possess anything which is related to democracy or political economy. It was just a use of power by covertly manipulating people into its web as Bob Jessop (2012) discusses in *Marxist approach to Power* that is "in control over the state, or in intellectual hegemony over hearts and minds" (Jessop, 2012). Imran Khan managed to maintain this intellectual hegemony over people of Pakistan. That is why, after getting his demands unfulfilled, he directs his people to destroy property and the peace of the country.

To further understand political power relations, Mohsin uses the pronoun "his" to indicate someone who is behind the picture and giving directions. These are the inherent notions of power which she disrupts gradually in the novel displaying that ideologies are

not purely intellectual matter, but are rooted in the interests of the state. Althusser's definition of apparatuses relate in this situation as "the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions 'by violence,' the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'" (Althusser, 1971, p. 145). This anonymous allusion to some institutions indicates that both ISAs are at work here. The institution (which Mohsin later reveals as army) functions to repress people, as well as control them, ideologically and (if needed) with the use of force. Butterfly gives an impression that all the chaos is created by the support of some hidden hand (army) and portrays IK as a puppet in the hand of these inherent powers. Mohsin deliberately mentions these power relations webbed by military into the politics of Pakistan to expose them. She then advises IK to sit at home and wait for his next orders (Mohsin, p.25) as all the major orders of state and government come from this hidden hand. Current framework locates how with help of media and education they made and maintained their hegemony in the minds of people of Pakistan and created their soft image. This image always helped them to influence political situations and by having this power they used it for their own benefit. As Althusser argues, "The function of the ideological state apparatus is to produce ideological forms that perpetuate the ruling class's dominance and obscure the contradictions of the social order" (Althusser, 1971, p. 127). Therefore, these anonymous military officials only played with people's perceptions and acted as a ruling class to them.

### **Nexus between Culture, Hegemony and Ideology and Complexities of Economic, Social and Political Power Relations**

Culture, hegemony, and ideology's nexus provides a fruitful interpretive canvas to explore the intricacies of economic, social, and political power relations in Moni Mohsin's *Between You Me & The Four Walls*. These relations intersect and helps us determine those little ways in which power acts. Moni Mohsin's satirical novel portrays Pakistan's elite and how their cultural, hegemonic and ideological suppositions construct power. Influential people and institutes shape the culture of a society and it becomes 'a whole way of life' (Williams, 1983, p. XVI). It is a novel about the haves and have-nots. In terms of culture, the desires and consumption habits of the elite are normalized and glorified, further toughening their position in society.

Likewise, Media, education and social institutions facilitate viewpoint of the elite and justify their purposes. The novel's protagonist, often without knowing it herself, appears to offer a lesson on the ideological power that maintains and reproduces existing powerful structures. ISAs work to establish the ideology of a ruling class by hiding this dominance in subtle ways over generations, often through institutions such as politics (Althusser, 1971, p.73). Anyone who breaks the chains of normalcy and puts such things into question embodies a force for ideological shift. In one of the diary entries where Butterfly discusses attacks on famous journalist of that time, Hamid Mir, while also sharing the possible reason for counter-hegemonic views. "And they are attacked by God-Knows-who" (Mohsin, 2022, p.7). Being so naive, Kulchoo tries to discover from her mother about the person who attacked Hamid Mir. Butterfly, deliberately tries to refuse to speak that name. "Hai, Kulchoo, I said, please don't take his name. Zamana is very bad. Agencies are very sensitive at being named. Kuch pata nai kal ko kia ho jaye" (Mohsin, 2022, p.7). Her remarks indicate that institution of intelligence agency is involved in this incident.

Similarly, governments use different methods for oppressing writers as well as other intellectuals to keep opposition under control. This suppression happens in educational, political, and cultural settings. Media and visual culture is what John Fiske (1987) discusses openly "The media do not simply reflect reality; they produce it by selecting and organizing elements of the world, influencing our perceptions and experiences" (Fiske, 1987, p. 14). Likewise, Media power regulates what people get to hear

and which messages are imposed on them by authorities. As Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* discuss “Media representation plays a crucial role in determining whose voices are heard. The mainstream media often reinforces existing power structures by sidelining dissenting views” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. 10). Similarly, Gramsci argues, “Hegemony involves the process by which a dominant group secures the consent of subordinate groups, often leading to the silencing of the alternative voices” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). This dominant ideology pillars the society’s consensus, a position that hampers intellectuals from voicing their dissenting opinion. In the same way, these agencies use media and other state apparatuses to create hegemony and silence the voices against them. Mohsin exposes Millitary; the most reputable institution in Pakistan, and puts the blame of kidnapping of media persons like Hamid Mir.

Furthermore, power structures within society are established by the (mis) use of ISAs and RSAs. Social media and electronic media are controlled by authorities. Butterfly shows her concern regarding freedom of the press. In one of the episodes of the novel, she alludes,

“Bilawal Bhutto is right, he said. This is not Pakistan, it is Banistan. Anything you disagree with? Anything you don’t like? Ban it immediately! Ban new year parties, ban basant, ban youtube, ban Geo, ban Malala’s book” (Mohsin, 2022, p.8).

Pakistan has been running from crises due to those people who attain power and influence society, media, economy, and almost everything in the country. Bilawal Bhutto, despite being the chairman of one of the leading political parties of Pakistan, is compelled to comment on such a tarnished system of the nation where everything is banned. He rightly calls it ‘Banistan’ (Mohsin, 2022). According to Mohsin, the power is being generated from somewhere else- the one who has no ears to listen to criticism and immediately ban those things, they do not like. For example, it is May 2014, one famous news channel; GEO is banned, YouTube is banned and a book written by one of the Pakistani educationists is banned, and Butterfly sarcastically mentions that maybe they will ban mangoes “because they give too much pleasure to people” (Mohsin, 2022, p.8). So, it is right to keep one’s mouth shut despite revelation of the truth. “That’s right, he said, pushing back his chair and jumping off to his feet. The only way to survive in Banistan is to shut your mouth and close your eyes and cover your ears” (Mohsin, 2022, p.8) as you do not exist.

Also, another episode depicts increased terrorism in Pakistan. Amidst these conditions, the role of agencies is questionable and according to Janoo, the agencies are doing nothing. The novel does so by casting doubt on agencies as a whole. “Intelligence agencies all over the world do it daily, said Janoo.’ That’s their job. But our ISI didn’t intercept the attack on Abbottabad, didn’t predict the attack on Mehran, couldn’t even prevent the attack on Rawalpindi GHQ” (Mohsin, 2022, pp.12-13). The reference to the APS attack adds more weight to this criticism, with its sickening imagery of terrorists shooting up innocent kids in a secure military compound. This kind of catastrophic incident occurred precisely because a large number of resources had been allocated to prevent it by security agencies. If we return once more to *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels astutely observed in the mid-1800s that “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Marx & Engels, 1848, p.34). In a Pakistani perspective, it implies that the security apparatus might be more inclined to protect elite benefits instead of attending real issues bringing human insecurity. Mohsin’s portrayal of terrorism and the failures of ISI examined from a Marxist perspective



are reflection of how state security apparatuses no longer serve the real interests of the people.

A conversation between Janoo, Butterfly and Mulloo is helpful in understanding these circumstances, where Mulloo predicts the results of upcoming election of August 2018.

“He said when it was Benazir v Nawaz, he voted for Benazir because Nawaz was the military’ puppet. Now when it is Imran v Nawaz, Imran is their puppet, he is with Nawaz. But Mulloo says, Imran doesn’t need to fight the election even. He’s already won. Janoo says what she is saying is bilkul theek. It’s already been decided. Imran will be the next PM. Whatever the real result of the election” (Mohsin, p.68).

It is no coincidence as similar happens what she predicts. These aspects seem to indicate the huge impact of the prevailing political culture especially the politico-military relations as evidenced in the conversation. Here, the political culture enables the landscape to dictate the electoral decision of individuals like Janoo. In this vein, hegemony’s power works by naturalizing ideologies and values that support the existing social and power structures. For Gramsci, “hegemony is the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Hegemony occurs where the idea is expressed that Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan are the puppets controlled or backed by the military, and thus, the actual political power belongs to the military. Here, military acts as a dominant fundamental group. It shows how the military wants to annex the political arena through the manipulation of the votes for the politicians.

Additionally, discussions of Janoo's politics allude to the complex logic of power and hegemony in the Pakistani political landscape. Gramsci argues, “that the ruling class maintains control not only through direct force but also through ideological means, creating a consensus that aligns with their interests” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Gramsci’s theory of hegemony works here when Janoo says that he used to support Benazir Bhutto and then Nawaz Sharif, but now supports Nawaz against IK because he thinks the army is backing him up. It demonstrates the military's control over political results, using hidden means to ensure that public perception and electoral outcomes are rigged in their favor through public coercion. The idea, IK is fated to win, demonstrates the way in which democratic processes are twisted by deep currents of power that must steer current systems from their incumbent hegemonic path. He adds on cultural hegemony that “The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'... The intellectuals have the function of organizing the social hegemony of a class and of the dominance of its state apparatus” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 57) and this is what happens in the course of the novel.

### **Role of ISAs in Creating Pro-Army Mentality in Mohsin’s Novel**

One of the episodes from Moni Mohsin's *Between You Me and The Four Walls* vividly illustrates how a pro-army culture is created and sustained within a society. By attributing all positive developments to General Raheel Sharif (referred to as "Gensaab"), the narrative fosters a strong and positive image of the military. For Williams “The forms of culture are always changing and evolving, responding to the dynamic interactions of social groups and historical circumstances” (Williams, 1981, p. 31). Mulloo, who has been a stereotypical Pakistani, becomes the patron of this cultural ideology. “Everything good that happens in Pakistan is Gensaab’s doing. Anything bad that doesn’t happen is also Gensaab’s doing. So, if there is no bomb today, it is thanks to Gensaab. If, on Mulloo’s last visit to Karachi,

she didn't get shot and killed, it's thanks to Gensaab. If the bijli didn't go for twenty-four hours yesterday, it's thanks to Gensaab. If there's still water to drink in Pakistan, it's thanks to Gensaab" (Mohsin, 2022, p.49).

The army consciousness represented by General Raheel Sharif/Gensaab takes all the praise. This attribution of Mulloo serves to cultivate an impeccable pro-army culture that is endlessly evolving. It is because the process of how the army builds ideology through ISAs working to create and maintain hegemony. It principally manifests as 'hero worship', with the character attributing all positive outcomes to Gensaab. The narrative attempts to create the impression of further strengthening an image already well-received by ordinary Pakistanis after Zarb-e-Azb which was a military operation done by the army in suspected areas filled with terrorists. Mulloo further goes on and makes a mountain out of a molehill in praising General Sharif. "You know who is doing all the relieve work? She shouted. The Army! Ji haan. And you know on whose orders? Gensaab'sb! All those helicopters he is sending, all the trucks vaghera. You think they're going on their own?" (Mohsin, 2022, p.50). Althusser puts in this situation that "The function of the ideological state apparatus is to produce ideological forms that perpetuate the ruling class's dominance and obscure the contradictions of the social order" (Althusser, 1971, p. 127). Army uses media coverage as ideological forms to showcase its success stories as well as its humanitarian efforts. In addition, narratives of education and the positive portrayal in movies play key role in changing perceptions of people. This continuous sponsorship by the army and ISAs enforce and surround a good image of the army.

Mohsin adds on that General Raheel did not demand extension or maybe he demanded and kept it a secret (Mohsin, 2022, p.79). This deed is regarded as a rare case among the military history of Pakistan. By using the names of powerful military leaders, Mohsin shows how the military's spirit penetrates people's stories and political agendas. Althusser's ideas interpret military agendas as "They inculcate the ideology of the ruling class into the masses, ensuring their consent and participation in the status quo" (Althusser, 1971, p. 145). Zia, another General also gets referred to as the same because he did not wish to relinquish the power. Similarly, Bourdieu asserts that symbolic violence is being used by these kind of people, who are made to see their subordinated place in the social order and believes it as just employing imposing categories of thought or perception" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 1). They act as authorities and Pakistan is their subordinated place. One example of this is a measurement that demonstrate "4.5% of the country's GDP and half of the country's export revenue" (Rahim, Fatima, & Nazir, 2023) were being used by only 620,000 military forces in 2007. All above examples given by Mohsin shows how power relations are at work and in what ways culture affects its people and eventually forms ideologies that support the notion that the military is a dependable institution. Michel Foucault explain these power relations as "The disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals" (Foucault, 1977, p. 211). Thus, using metaphors and mundane language concerning Generals Zia, Kiyani, and Musharraf, Mohsin restrains and convincingly reveals the profoundly ideological and hegemonic military establishment in Pakistan. The concepts of hegemony and ISAs allow an understanding of how the military occupation does not only rely on force and physical domination, but also on the incorporation culture, ideology into hegemony and fashion collective discourse.

## Conclusion

The paper has examined a Marxist critique of Moni Mohsin's novel, *Between You, Me, and The Four Walls* (2022) by employing an intersectional framework of Marxist and Cultural theories comprising Raymond William's Cultural theory, Gramsci's Hegemony, and Althusser's Ideology. The present paper has informed socio-political power relations

which are established and maintained in Pakistan. Moni Mohsin provides Pakistani society's minute cultural details by capturing its multiple dimensions. She has tackled the repeated departures of Pakistani military leaders, their occupation on governments and creation of pro-army outlook in the minds of Pakistani masses. The plot has exposed the frivolous and irritating shallowness of the Pakistani elite, military and establishment. Moreover, Mohsin has provided a lot of examples of military failures as institution, their interferences in democratic affairs of Pakistan and how they are responsible for economic deprivation. This article has proved that in Pakistan, political and military leaderships have been a bunch of superficial ideologies, while sharing the same purpose of possession and exercise of power over a nation. This paper informs who is responsible for political and social turmoil in the country. The study has also unveiled that how a desired culture – i.e. love for military or any political figure-- is prevailed in a society which tends towards making an ideology by (mis) using state apparatuses and how these apparatuses; media, education and religion, help to fetch desired upshots. Eventually, things get normalized and a hegemony is formed after indoctrination of individuals and groups. That is why this article raises awareness and could be considered as a first step in the direction that unveils the power dynamics in Pakistani society and encourages critical thinking and self-reflection toward constructing a fair and just society.

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